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*THE GREAT HOUSE.*

*A STORY OF QUIET TIMES.*

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BEN BOSHAM.

It was Tuesday, market day at Riddsley. Farmers' wives, cackling as loudly as the poultry they carried, elbowed one another on the brick pavements or clustered before the windows of the low-browed shops. Farmers in white great-coats, with huge handkerchiefs about their necks, streamed from the yards of the Packhorse and the Barley Mow, and meeting a friend planted themselves in the roadway as firmly as if they had stood in their own pastures. Now and again a young spark, fancying all eyes upon his four-year-old, sidled through the throng with many a 'Whoa!' and 'Where be'st going, lad?' While on the steps of the Market-Cross and about the long line of carts that rested on their shafts in the open street, hucksters chaffered and house-wives haggled over the rare egg or the keg of salted butter.

The quacking of ducks, the neighing of horses, the sing-song of rustic voices filled the streets. It was common talk that the place was as full as at the March Fair. The excitement of the Election had gone abroad, the cry that the land was at stake had brought in some, others had come to see what was afoot. Many a stout tenant was here who at other times left the marketing to his womenfolk; and shrewd glances he cast at the gentry, as he edged past the justices who lounged before the Audley Arms and killed in gossip the interval between the Magistrates' Meeting, at which they had just a sisted, and the Ordinary at which they were to support young Mottisfont.

The great men talked loudly and eagerly, were passionate, were in earnest. Occasionally one of the younger of them would

step aside to look at a passing hackney, or an older man would speak to a favourite tenant whom he called by his first name. But, for the most part, they clung together, fine upstanding figures, in high-collared riding-coats and top-boots. They were keen to a man ; the farmers keen also, but not so keen. For the argument that high wheat meant high rents, and that most of the benefits of protection went to the landlords, had got about even in Riddsley. The squires complained that the farmers would only wake up when it was too late !

Still, in such a place, and on market-day, four out of five were in the landed interest ; four-fifths of the squires, four-fifths of the parsons, almost four-fifths of the tenants. For the labourers, no one asked what they thought of it—they had ten shillings a week and no votes. ‘Peel—od rot him !’ cried the majority, ‘ might shift as often as his own spinning-jenny ! But not they ! No Manchester man, and no Tamworth man either, should teach them their business ! Who would die if there were no potatoes ? It was a flam, a bite, but it wouldn’t bamboozle Stafford farmers !’

Meanwhile Stubbs, moving quietly through the throng, spoke with one here and there. He had the same word for all. ‘Listen to me, John,’ he would say, his hand on the yeoman’s shoulder. ‘Peel says he’s been wrong all these years and is only right now. Then, if you believe him, he’s a fool ; and if you don’t believe him, he’s a knave. Not a very good vet., John, eh ? Not the vet. for the old grey mare, eh ?’

This had a great effect. John went away and repeated it to himself, and presently grasped the dilemma and chuckled over it. Ten minutes later he imparted it, with the air of a Solomon, to the ‘Duke,’ who mouthed it and liked it and rolled it off to the first he met. It went the round of the inns and about four o’clock a farmer fresh from the ‘tap’ put it to Stubbs and convinced him ; and that night men, travelling home market-peart in the charge of their wives, bore it to many a snug homestead set in orchards of hard cider-apples.

Had the issue of the Election lain with the Market, indeed, it had been over. But of the hundred and ninety voters no more than fifteen were farmers, and though the main trade of the town sided with them, the two factories were in opposition ; and cheap bread had its charms for the lesser fry. But the free traders were too wise to flaunt their views on market-day, and it was left for little Ben Bosham, whose vote was pretty nearly his all, to distinguish himself in the matter.

He, too, had been at the tap, and about noon his voice was heard issuing from a group who stood near the Audley Arms. ‘Be I free, or bain’t I?’ he bawled. ‘Answer me that, Mr. Bagenal!’

A knot of farmers had edged him into a corner and were disposed to bait him. A stubby figure in a velveteen coat and drab breeches, his hand on an ash-plant, he held his ground among them, tickled by the attention he excited and fired by his own importance. ‘Be I free or bain’t I?’ he repeated.

‘Free?’ Bagenal answered contemptuously. ‘You be free to make a fool of yourself, Ben! I’m thinking you’d ha’ us all lay down the ground to lazy pasture and live by milk, as you do!’

‘Milk?’ ejaculated a stout man of many acres, whose contempt for such traffic was above speech. ‘You’ll be free to go out of Bridge-End,’ cried a third. ‘That’s what you’ll be free to do! And where’ll your vote be then, Ben?’

But there Bosham was sure of himself. ‘That’s where you be wrong, Mr. Willet,’ he retorted with gusto. ‘My vote dunno come o’ my landlord, and in the Bridge-End or out of the Bridge-End, I’ve a vote while I’ve a breath! Tain’t the landlord’s vote, and why’d I give it to he? Free I be—not like you, begging your pardon! Freeman, old freeman, I be, of this borough! Freeman by marriage!’

‘Then you be a very rare thing!’ Bagenal retorted slyly. ‘There’s a many lose their freedom that way, but you be the first I ever heard of that got it!’

‘And a hard bargain, too, as I hear,’ said Willet.

This drew a roar of laughter. The crowd grew thicker and the little man’s temper grew short, for his wife was no beauty. He began to see that they were playing with him.

‘You leave me alone, Mr. Willet,’ he said angrily, ‘and I’ll leave you alone!’

‘Leave thee alone!’ said the farmer who had turned up his nose at milk. ‘So I would, same as any other lump o’ dirt! But yo’ don’t let us. Yo’ set up to know more than your betters! Pity the old lord ain’t alive to put his stick about your back!’

‘Did it smart, Ben?’ cried a lad who had poked himself in between his betters.

‘You let me catch you,’ Ben cried, ‘and I’ll make you smart. You be all a set of slaves! You’d set your thatch afire if squire’d tell you! Set o’ slaves, set o’ slaves you be!’

'And what be you, Bosham?' said a man who had just joined the group. 'Head of the men, bain't you? Cheap bread and high wages, that's your line, ain't it!'

'That's his line, be it?' said the old farmer slowly. 'Bit of a rascal it seems yo' be? Don't yo' let me find you in my boosey pasture talking to no men o' mine, or I'll make yo' smart a sight more than his lordship did!'

'Ay, that's Ben's line,' said the new comer.

'You're a liar!' Ben shrieked. 'A dommed liar you be! I see you not half an hour agone coming out of Stubbs's office! I know who told you to say that, you varmint! I'll have the law of you!'

'Ben Bosham, the labourers' friend!' the man retorted.

Ben was furious, for he was frightened. There was no feud so bitter in the forties as the feud between farmer and labourer. The labourer had no vote, he had lost his common rights, his wood, his cow-feed; he was famished, he was crushed by the new Poor Law, and so he was often in an ugly mood, as singed barns and burning stacks went to show. Bosham knew that he might flout the squires, and at worst be turned out of his holding; but woe betide him if he got the name of the labourers' friend. Moreover, there was just so much truth in the accusation as made it dangerous. Ben and his brother eked out the profits of the dairy by occasional labour, and Ben had sometimes vapoured in tap-rooms where he had better have held his tongue. He shrieked furiously, therefore, at the false witness, and even tried to reach him with his ash-plant. 'Who be you?' he screamed. 'You be a lawyer's pup, you be! You'd ruin me, you would! Let me get a hold of you and I'll put a mark on you! You be lying!'

'I don't know about that,' said the big farmer slowly and weightily. 'I'm feared yo're a bit of a rascal, Ben.'

'Ay, and fine he'll look in front of Stafford Gaol some morning!' said Willet.

On that, in a happy moment for Ben, while he gaped for a retort and found none, two carriers' vans, huge wooden vehicles festooned with rabbits and baskets and drawn by three horses abreast, lumbered through the crowd and scattered it. In a twinkling Ben was left alone, an angry man, aware that he had cut but a poor figure!

He had been frightened, too, and he resented it. He thirsted for some chance of setting himself right, of proving to others that he

was a freeman and not as other men. And in the nick of time he saw a chance—if only he had the courage to rise to it. He saw moving towards him through the press a mail-phæton and pair. On the box, caped and gloved, the pink of fashion, sat no less a person than his lordship himself. A servant in the well-known livery, a white coat with a blue collar, sat behind him.

The vans which had freed Ben blocked the great man's way, and he was moving at a walk. All heads were bared as he passed, and he was acknowledging the courtesy with his whip when Ben stepped before the horses and lifted his hand. In an instant a hundred eyes were on the man and he knew that he had burned his boats. Bravado was now his only chance.

'My lord,' he cried, waving his hat impudently. 'I want to know what you be going to do about me?'

My lord hardly caught his words and did not catch his meaning, but he saw that the man was almost under the horses' feet and he checked them. Ben stood aside then, but, as the carriage passed him, he laid his hand on the splashboard and walked beside it. He looked up at the great man and in the same impudent tone, 'Be you a-going to turn me out, my lord?' he cried. 'That's what I want to know.'

'I don't understand you,' Audley said coldly. He guessed that the man referred to the Election, and what was the use of understrappers like Stubbs if he was to be exposed to this?

'I'm Ben Bosham of the Bridge-End, my lord, that's who I be,' Ben replied brazenly. 'I'm not ashamed of my name. I want to know whether you be a-going to turn me out, and my wife and my child! That's what—'

Then a farmer seized him and dragged him back, and others laid hands on him, though he still shouted. 'Dunno be a fool!' cried the farmer, deeply shocked. 'Drive on, drive on, my lord! Never heed him. He've had a glass too much!'

'Packhorse beer, my lord,' explained a second in stentorian tones—though he knew that Ben was fairly sober.

'Ought to be ashamed of himself!' cried a third, and he shook the aggressor. Ben was in a minority of one, and those who held him were inclined to be rough.

Audley waved his whip good-humouredly. 'Take care of him!' he said. 'Don't hurt him!' And he drove on, outwardly unmoved though inwardly fuming. Still had it ended there

little harm would have been done. But word of the brawl outran the carriage and, as it chanced, reached the door of Hatton's Works as the men came out to dinner. Ben Bosham had spoken his mind to his lordship ! His lordship had driven over him ! The farmers had beaten him ! The news passed from one to another like flame, and the hands stood, some two score of them, and hooted my lord loudly, shouting 'Shame !' and jeering at him.

Now had Audley been the candidate he would have thought nothing of it. He would have laughed in the men's faces and taken it as part of the day's work ; or had he been the old lord, he would have flung a curse at the jeer and cut at the nearest with his whip—and forgotten it.

But he was not the old lord, times were changed, and the thing angered him. It was in an ill temper that he drove on along the road that rose by gentle degrees to the Great Chase.

For the matter of that, he had been in a black mood for some time, because he could not make up his mind. Night and morning ambition whispered to him to put the vessel about ; to steer the course which experience told him that it behoved a man to steer who was not steeped in romance, nor too greedy for the moment's enjoyment ; the course which, beyond all doubt, he would have steered were he now starting !

But he was not starting ; and when he thought of shifting the helm he foresaw difficulties. He did not think that he was a soft-hearted man, yet he feared that when it came to the point he would flinch. Besides, he told himself that he was a man of honour ; and the change was a little at odds with this. But there again, he reflected that truth was honour and in the end would cause less pain.

Eight thousand pounds was so very small a portion ! And for safety, he no longer needed to play for it. John Audley was dead and the Bible was in his hands ; his case was beyond cavil or question, while the political situation was such that he saw no opening, no chance of enrichment in that direction. To make Mary, handsome, good, attractive as she was—to make her the wife of a poor peer, of a discontented, dissatisfied man—this, if he could only find it in his heart to tell her the truth, would be a cruel kindness.

As he drove along the road, angry with the wretched Bosham, angry with Stubbs, angry with the fools who had hooted him,

he was not sorry to feel his ill-temper increase. He might not find it so difficult to speak to her. A little effort and the thing would be done. Eight thousand pounds? The interest would barely dress her. Whereas, if she had played her cards well and been heir to her uncle's thirty thousand—the case would have been different. After all, the fault lay with her.

He roused the off-horse with a sharp cut, and a moment later discerned at the end of a long, straight piece of road, the moss-clad steps of the old Cross and standing beside them a figure he knew.

He was moved, even while, in his irritation, he was annoyed that she had come to meet him at a place that had recollections for him. It seemed to him that in doing this she was putting an unfair burden on him.

She waved her hand and he raised his hat. The day was bright and cold, and the east wind had whipped a fine colour into her cheeks. Perhaps that, too, was unfair.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MARY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

BUT his face was not one to betray his thoughts, and as he drew up beside Mary, horses fretting, polechains jingling, the silver of the harness glittering from a score of points, he made a gallant show. The most eager lover, Apollo himself in the chariot of the sun, had scarcely made a better approach to his mistress, had hardly carried it more finely over a mind open to appearances.

With a very fair show of haste he bade his man take the reins, and as the servant swung himself into the front seat the master sprang to the ground. His hand met Mary's, his curly-brimmed hat was doffed, his eyes smiled into hers. 'Well, better late than never!' he said.

'Yes,' she answered; but she spoke more soberly than he expected and her face was grave. 'You have been a long time away.'

That was their meeting. The servant was there; under his eyes it could not be warmer. Whether one or the other had foreseen this need not be asked.

He spoke to the man, who, possessed by a natural curiosity, was all ears. 'Keep them moving,' he said. 'Drive back a mile or two and return.' Then to Mary, his hat still in his hand, 'A long time away? Longer than I expected, and far longer than I hoped, Mary. Shall we go up the hill a little?'

'I thought you would propose that. I am so glad that it is fine.'

The man had turned the horses. Audley took her hand again and pressed it, looking in her face, telling himself that she grew more handsome every day. Why hadn't she thirty thousand pounds? Aloud he said 'So am I, very glad. Otherwise you could not have met me, and I fancied that you might not wish me to come to the house? Was that so, dear?'

'I think it was,' she said. 'He has been gone so very short a time. Perhaps it was foolish of me.'

'Not at all!' he answered, admiring the purity of her complexion. 'It was like you.'

'If we had told him, it would have been different.'

'On the other hand,' he said deftly, as he drew her hand through his arm, 'it might have troubled his last days? And now, tell me all, Mary, from the beginning. You have gone through dark days and I have not been—I could not be with you. But I want to share them.'

She told the story of John Audley's disappearance, her cheek growing pale as she described the alarm, the search, the approach of night and her anguish at the thought that her uncle might be lying in some place which they had overlooked! Then she told him of Basset's arrival, of the discovery, of the manner in which Peter had arranged everything and saved her in every way. It seemed to her that to omit this, to say nothing of him, would be as unfair to the one as uncandid to the other.

My lord's comment was cordial, yet it jarred on her. 'Well done!' he said. 'He was made to be of use, poor chap! If it were anyone else I should be jealous of him!' And he laughed, pressing her arm to his side.

She was quivering with the memories which her story had called up, and it was only by an effort that she checked the impulse to withdraw her hand. 'Had you been there—'

'I hope I should have done as much,' he replied complacently. 'But it was impossible.'

'Yes,' she said. And though she knew that her tone was cold,

she could not help it. For many, many times during the last month she had pondered over his long absence and the chill of his letters. Many times she had told herself that he was treating her with scant affection, scant confidence, almost with scant respect. But then again she had reflected that she must be mistaken, that she brought him nothing but herself, and that if he did not love her he would not have sought her. And telling herself that she expected too much of love, too much of her lover, she had schooled herself to be patient, and had resolved that not a word of complaint should pass her lips.

But to assume a warmth which she did not feel was another matter. This was beyond her.

He, for his part, set down her manner to a natural depression. 'Poor child !' he said, 'you have had a sad time. Well, we must make up for it. As soon as we can make arrangements you must leave that gloomy house where everything reminds you of your uncle and—and we must make a fresh start. Do you know where I am taking you ?'

She saw that they had turned off the road and were following a track that scrambled upwards through the scrub that clothed the slope below the Gatehouse. It slanted in the direction of the Great House. 'Not to Beaudelays ?' she said.

'Yes—to Beaudelays. But don't be afraid. Not to the house.'

'Oh, no !' she cried. 'I don't think I could bear to go there to-day !'

'I know. But I want you to see the gardens. I want you to see what might have been ours, what we might have enjoyed had fortune been more kind to us ! Had we been rich, Mary ! It is hard to believe that you have never seen even the outside of the Great House.'

'I have never been beyond the Iron Gate.'

'And all these months within a mile !'

'All these months within a mile. But he did not wish it. It was one of the first things he made me understand.'

'Ah ! Well, there is an end of that !' And again so matter-of-fact was his tone that she had to struggle against the impulse to withdraw her arm. 'Now, if there is anyone who has a right to be there, it is you ! And I want to be the one to take you there. I want you to see for yourself that it is only fallen grandeur that you are marrying, Mary, the thing that has been, not the thing

that is. By G—d ! I don't know that there is a creature in the world—certainly there is none in my world—more to be pitied than a poor peer !'

'That's nothing to me,' she said. And, indeed, his words had brought him nearer to her than anything he had said. So that when, taking advantage of the undergrowth which hid them from the road below he put his arm about her and assisted her in her climb, she yielded readily. 'To think,' he said, 'that you have never seen this place ! I wonder that after we parted you did not go the very next morning to visit it !'

'Perhaps I wished to be taken there by you.'

'By Jove ! Do you know that that is the most lover-like thing you have said.'

'I may improve with practice,' she rejoined. 'Indeed, it is possible,' she continued demurely, 'that we both need practice !'

She had not a notion that he was in two minds ; that one half of him was revelling in the hour, pleased with possession, enjoying her beauty, dwelling on the dainty curves of her figure, while the other uncertain, wavering, was asking continually, 'Shall I or shall I not ?' But if she did not guess thoughts to which she had no clue he was sharp enough to understand hers. 'Ah ! you are there, are you ?' he said. 'Wait ! Presently, when we are out of sight of that cursed road——'

'I didn't find fault !'

On that there was a little banter between them, gallant and smiling on his part, playful and defensive on hers, which lasted until they reached a door leading into the lower garden. It was a rusty, damp-stained door, once painted green, and masked by trees somewhat higher than the underwood through which they had climbed. Ivy hung from the wall above it, rank grass grew against it, the air about it was dank, and in summer sent up the smell of wild leeks. Once under-gardeners had used it to come and go, and many a time on moonlit nights maids had stolen through it to meet their lovers in the coppice or on the road.

Audley had brought the key and he set it in the lock and turned it. But he did not open the door. Instead, he turned to Mary with a smile. 'This is my surprise,' he said. 'Shut your eyes and open them when I tell you. I will guide you.'

She complied without suspicion, and heard the door squeak on its rusty hinges. Guided by his hand she advanced three or four

paces. She heard the door close behind her. He put his arm round her and drew her on. 'Now?' she asked, 'May I look?'

'Yes, now!' he answered. As he spoke he drew her to him, and, before she knew what to expect, he had crushed her to his breast and was pressing kisses on her face and lips.

She was taken by surprise, so completely, that for a moment she was helpless, without defence. Then the instinctive impulse to resist overcame her, and she struggled fiercely; and, presently she released herself. 'Oh, you shouldn't have done it!' she cried. 'You shouldn't have done it!'

'My darling!'

'You—you hurt me!' she panted, her breath coming short and quick. She was as red now as she had for a moment been white. Her lips trembled, and there were tears in her eyes. He thought that he had been too rough with her, and though he did not understand, he stayed his impulse to seize her again. Instead, he stood looking down at her, a little put out.

She tried to smile, tried to pass it off; but she was put to it, he could see, not to burst into tears. 'Perhaps I am foolish,' she faltered, 'but please don't do it again.'

'I can't promise—for always,' he answered smiling. But, none the less, he was piqued. What a prude the girl was! What a *Sainte-ni-touche!* To make such a fuss about a few kisses!

She tried to take the same tone. 'I know I am silly,' she said, 'but you took me by surprise.'

'You were very innocent, then, my dear. Still, I'll be good, and next time I will give you warning. Now, don't be afraid, take my arm, and let us—'

'If I could sit down?' she murmured. Then he saw that the colour had again left her cheeks.

There was an old wheelbarrow inside the door, half full of dead leaves. He swept it clear, and she sat down on the edge of it. He stood by her, puzzled, and at a loss.

Certainly he had played a trick on her, and he had been a little rough because he had felt her impulse to resist. But she must have known that he would kiss her sooner or later. And she was no child. Her convent days were not of yesterday. She was a woman. He did not understand it.

Alas, she did understand it! It was not her lover's kisses, it was not his passion or his roughness that had shaken Mary. She

was not a prude and she was a woman. That which had overwhelmed her was the knowledge, forced on her by his embrace, that she did not love him ! That, however much she might have deluded herself a few weeks earlier, however far she might have let the lure of love mislead her, she did not love this man ! And she was betrothed to him, she was promised to him, she was his ! On her engagement to him, on her future with him had been based—a moment before—all her plans and all her hopes for the future.

No wonder that the colour was struck from her face, that she was shaken to the depths of her being. For, indeed, she knew something more—that she had had her warning and had closed her eyes to it. That evening, when she had heard Basset's step come through the hall, that moment when his presence had lifted the burden of suspense from her, should have made her wise. And for an instant the veil had been lifted, and she had been alarmed. But she had reflected that the passing doubt was due to her lover's absence and his coldness ; and she had put the doubt from her. When Audley returned all would be well, she would feel as before. She was hipped and lonely and the other was kind—that was all !

Now she knew that that was not all. She did not love Audley and she did love someone else. And it was too late. She had misled herself, she had misled the man who loved her, she had misled that other whom she loved. And it was too late !

For a time that was short, yet seemed long to her companion, she sat lost in thought and unconscious of his presence. At length he could bear it no longer. Pale cheeks and dull eyes had no charm for him ! He had not come, he had not met her, for this.

'Come !' he said. 'Come, Mary, you will catch cold sitting there ! One might suppose I was an ogre !'

She smiled wanly. 'Oh, no !' she said, 'It is I—who am foolish. Please forgive me.'

'If you would like to go back ?'

But her ear detected temper in his tone, and with a newborn fear of him she hastened to appease him. 'Oh, no !' she said. 'You were going to show me the gardens !'

'Such as they are. It is a sorry sight, I can tell you.' She rose and, taking her arm, he led her some fifty yards along the

alley in which they were, then, turning to the right, he stopped. 'There,' he said. 'What do you think of it ?'

They had before them the long, dank, weed-grown walk, broken midway by the cracked fountain and closed at the far end by the broad flight of broken steps that led upward to the terrace and so to the great lawn. When Audley had last stood on this spot the luxuriance of autumn had clothed the neglected beds. A tangle of vegetation, covering every foot of soil with leaf and bloom, had veiled the progress of neglect. Now, as by magic, all was changed. The sun still shone, but coldly and on a bald scene. The roses that had run riot, the spires of hollyhocks that had risen above them, the sunflowers that had struggled with the encroaching elder, nay, the very bindweed that had strangled all alike in its green embrace, were gone, or only reared naked stems. Gone, too, were the Old Man, the Sweet William, the St. John's Wort, the wilderness of humbler growths that had pressed about their feet; and from the bare earth and leafless branches, the fountain and the sundial alone, like mourners over fallen grandeur, lifted grey heads.

There is no garden that has not its sad season, its days of stillness and mourning, but this garden was sordid as well as sad. Its dead lay unburied.

Involuntarily Mary spoke. 'Oh, it is terrible !' she cried.

'It is terrible,' he answered gloomily.

Then she feared that, preoccupied as she was with other thoughts, she had hurt him. She was trying to think of something to comfort him, when he repeated, 'It is terrible ! But, d—n it, let us see the rest of it ! We've come here for that ! Let us see it !'

Together they went slowly along the walk. They came to the sundial. She hung a moment, wishing to read the inscription, but he would not stay. 'It's the old story,' he said. 'We are gay fellows in the sunshine, but in the shadow—we are moths.'

He did not explain his meaning. He drew her on. They mounted the wide flight which had once, flanked by urns and nymphs and hot with summer sunshine, echoed the tread of red-heeled shoes and the ring of spurs. Now, elder grew between the shattered steps, weeds clothed them, the nymphs mouldered, lacking arms and heads, the urns gaped.

Mary felt his depression and would have comforted him, but

her brain was numbed by the discovery which she had made ; she was unable to think, without power to help. She shared, she more than shared, his depression. And it was not until they had surmounted the last flight and stood gazing on the Great House that she found her voice. Then, as the length and vastness of the pile broke upon her, she caught her breath. 'Oh,' she cried. 'It is immense !'

'It's a nightmare,' he replied. 'That is Beaudelays ! That is,' with bitterness, 'the splendid seat of Philip, fourteenth Lord Audley—and a millstone about his neck ! It is well, my dear, that you should see it ! It is well that you should know what is before you ! You see your home ! And what you are marrying—if you think it worth while !'

If she had loved him she would have been strong to comfort him. If she had even fancied that she loved him, she would have known what to answer. As it was, she was dumb ; she scarcely took in the significance of his words. Her mind—so much of it as she could divert from herself—was engaged with the sight before her, with the long rows of blank and boarded windows, the smokeless chimneys, the raw, unfinished air that, after eighty years, betrayed that this had never been a home, had never opened its doors to happy brides, nor heard the voices of children.

At last she spoke. 'And this is Beaudelays ?' she said.

'That is my home,' he replied. 'That's the place I've come to own ! It's a pleasant possession ! It promises a cheerful homecoming, doesn't it ?'

'Have you never thought of—of doing anything to it ?' she asked timidly.

'Do you mean—have I thought of completing it ? Of repairing it ?'

'I suppose I meant that,' she replied.

'I might as well think,' he retorted, 'of repairing the Tower of London ! All I have in the world wouldn't do it ! And I cannot pull it down. If I did, the lawyers first, and the housebreakers afterwards, would pull down all I have with it ! There is no escape, my dear,' he continued slowly. 'Once I thought there was. I had my dream. I've stood on this lawn on summer days and I've told myself that I would build it up again, and that the name of Audley should not be lost. But I am a peer, what can I do ? I cannot trade, I cannot plead. For a

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peer there is but one way—marriage. And there were times when I had visions of repairing the breach—in that way ; when I thought that I could set the old name first and my pleasure second ; when I dreamed of marrying a great dowry that should restore us to the place we once enjoyed. But—that is over ! That is over,' he repeated in a sinking voice. 'I had to choose between prosperity and happiness ; I made my choice. God grant that we may never repent it !'

He sank into silence, waiting for her to speak ; he waited with exasperation. She did not, and he looked down at her. Then, 'I believe,' he said, 'that you have not heard a word I have said !'

She glanced up, startled. 'I am afraid I have not,' she answered meekly. 'Please forgive me. I was thinking of my uncle, and wondering where he died.'

It was all that Audley could do to check the oath that rose to his lips. For he had spoken with intention ; he had given her, as he thought, an opening ; and he had wasted his pains. He could hardly believe that she had not heard. He could almost believe that she was playing with him. But, in fact, she had barely recovered from the shock of her discovery, and the thing before her eyes—the house—held her attention.

'I believe that you think more of your uncle than of me !' he cried.

'No,' she replied, 'but he is gone and I have you.' She was beginning to be afraid of him ; afraid of him, because she felt that she was in fault.

'Yes,' he replied. 'But you must be more kind to me—or I don't know that you will keep me.'

She thought that he spoke in jest, and she pressed his arm.

'You don't want to go into the house ?'

'Oh no ! I could not bear it to-day.'

'Then you must not mind if I leave you for a moment. I have to look to something inside. I shall not be more than five minutes. Will you walk up and down.'

She assented, thankful to be alone with her thoughts ; and he left her. A burly, stately figure, he passed across the lawn and disappeared round the corner of the old wing where the yew trees grew close to the walls. He let himself into the house. He wished to examine the strong-room for himself and to see what traces were left of the tragedy which had taken place there.

But when he stood inside and felt the icy chill of the house, where each footstep awoke echoes, and a ghostly tread seemed to follow him, he went no farther than the shadowy drawing-room with its mouldering furniture and fallen screen. There, placing himself before an unshuttered pane, he stood some minutes without moving, his hands resting on the head of his cane, his eyes fixed on Mary. The girl was slowly pacing the length of the terrace, her head bent.

Whether the lonely figure, with its suggestion of sadness, made its appeal, or the attraction of a grace that no depression could mar, overcame the dictates of prudence, he hesitated. At last, 'I can't do it!' he muttered, 'hanged if I can! I suppose I ought not to have kissed her if I meant to do it to-day. No, I can't do it.'

And when, half an hour later, he parted from her at the old Cross at the foot of the hill, he had not done it.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### THE MEETING AT THE MAYPOLE.

WITHIN twenty-four hours there were signs that Bosham's brush with his lordship and the show of feeling outside Hatton's Works had set a sharper edge on the fight. Trifles as these were, the farmers about Riddsley took them up and resented them. The feudal feeling was not quite extinct. Their landlord was still a great man to them, and even those who did not love him believed that he was fighting their battle. An insult to him seemed, in any case, a portent, but that such a poor creature as Bosham—Ben Bosham of the Bridge-End—should insult him, went beyond bearing.

Moreover, it was beginning to be whispered that Ben was tampering with the labourers. One heard that he was preaching higher wages in the public houses, another that he was asking Hodge what he got out of dear bread, a third that he was vapouring about commons and enclosures. The farmers growled. The farmers' sons began to talk together outside the village inn. The farmers' wives foresaw rick-burning, maimed cattle, and empty hen coops, and said that they could not sleep in their beds for Ben.

Meanwhile those who, perhaps, knew something of the origin

of these rumours, and could size up the Boshams to a pound, were not unwilling to push the matter farther. Men who fancied with Stubbs that repeal of the corn-taxes meant the ruin of the country-side, were too much in earnest to pick and choose. They believed that this was a fight between the wholesome country and the black, sweating town, between the open life of the fields and the tyranny of mill and pit; and that the only aim of the repealer was to lower wages, and so to swell the profits that already enabled him to outshine the lords of the soil. They were prone, therefore, to think that any stick was good enough to beat so bad a dog, and if the stout arms of the farmers could redress the balance, they were in no mood to refuse their help.

Nor were sharpeners wanting on the other side. The methods of the League were brought into play. Women were sent out to sing through the streets of an evening, and the townsfolk ate their muffins to the doleful strains of :

‘ Child, is thy father dead ?  
Father is gone.  
Why did they tax his bread ?  
God’s will be done ! ’

And as there were enthusiasts on this side, too, who saw the work of the Corn Laws in the thin cheeks of children and the coffins of babes, the claims of John Barley-corn, roared from the windows of the Portcullis and the Packhorse, did not seem a convincing answer. A big loaf and a little loaf, carried high through the streets, made a wide appeal to non-voters ; and a banner with, ‘ You be taxing, we be starving ! ’ had its success. Then, on the evening of the market day, a band of Hatton’s men, fresh from the Three Tailors, came to blows with a market-peart farmer, and a ‘ hand ’ was not only knocked down, but locked up. Hatton’s and Banfield’s men were fired with indignation at this injustice, and Hatton himself said a little more at the Institute than Basset thought prudent.

These things had their effect, and more, perhaps, than was expected. For Stubbs, going back to his office one afternoon, suffered an unpleasant shock. Bosham’s impudence had not moved him, nor the jeers of Hatton’s men. But this turned out to be another matter. Farthingale, the shabby clerk with the high-bred nose, had news for him which he kept until the office door was locked. And the news was so bad that Stubbs stood aghast.

'What? All nine?' he cried. 'Impossible, man! The woman's made a fool of you!'

But Farthingale merely looked at him over his steel-rimmed spectacles. 'It's true,' he said.

'I'll never believe it!' cried the lawyer.

Farthingale shook his head. 'That won't alter it,' he said patiently. 'It's true.'

'Dyas the butcher! Why he served me for years! For years! I go to him at times now.'

'Only for veal,' replied the clerk, who knew everything. 'Pitt, of the sausage shop, and Badger, the tripeman, are in his pocket—buy his offal. With the other six, it's mainly the big loaf—Lake has a sister with seven children, and Thomas a father in the alms-house. Two more have big families, and the women have got hold of them!'

'But they've always voted right!' Stubbs urged, with a sinking heart. 'What's taken them?'

'If you ask me,' the clerk answered, 'I should say it was partly Squire Basset—he talks straight and it takes. And partly the split. When a party splits you can't expect to keep all. I doubted Dyas from the first. He's the head. They were all at his house last night and a prime supper he gave them.'

Stubbs groaned. At last, 'How much?' he asked.

Farthingale shook his head. 'Nix,' he said. 'You may be shaking Dyas's hand and find it's Hatton's. If you take my advice, you'll leave it alone.'

'Well,' the lawyer cried, 'of all the d---d ingratitude I ever heard of! The money Dyas has had from me!'

Farthingale's lips framed the words 'only veal,' but no sound came. Devoted as he was to his employer, he was enjoying himself. Election times were meat and drink—especially drink—to him. At such times his normal wage was royally swollen by Election extras, such as: 'To addressing one hundred circulars, one guinea. To folding and closing the same, half a guinea. To wafering the same, half a guinea. To posting the same, half a guinea.' A whole year's score, chalked up behind the door at the Portcullis, vanished as by magic at this season.

And then he loved the importance of it, and the secrecy, and the confidence that was placed in him and might safely be placed. The shabby clerk who had greased many a palm was himself above bribes.

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But Stubbs was aghast. Scarcely could he keep panic at bay. He had staked his reputation for sagacity on the result. He had made himself answerable for success, to his lordship, to the candidate, to the party. Not once, but twice, he had declared in secret council that defeat was impossible—impossible! Had he not done so, the contest, which his own side had invited, might have been avoided.

And then, too, his heart was in the matter. He honestly believed that these poor creatures, these weaklings whose defection might cost so much, were voting for the ruin of their children, for the impoverishment of the town. They would live to see the land pass into the hands of men who would live on it, not by it. They would live to see the farmers bankrupt, the country undersold, the town a desert!

The lawyer had counted on a safe majority of twenty-two on a register of a hundred and ninety voters. And twenty-two had seemed a buckler, sufficient against all the shafts and all the spite of fortune. But a majority of four—for that was all that remained if these nine went over—a majority of four was a thing to pale the cheek. Perspiration stood on his brow as he thought of it. His hand shook as he shuffled the papers on his desk, looking for he knew not what. For a moment he could not face even Farthingale, he could not command his eye or his voice.

At last, 'Who could get at Dyas?' he muttered.

Farthingale pondered for a time, but shook his head. 'No one,' he said. 'You might try Hayward if you like. They deal.'

'What's to be done, then?'

'There's only one way that I can think of,' the clerk replied, his eyes on his master's face. 'Rattle them! Set the farmers on them! Show them that what they're doing will be taken ill. Show 'em we're in earnest. Badger's a poor creature and Thomas's wife's never off the twitter. I'd try it, if I were you. You'd pull some back.'

They talked for a time in low voices and before he went into the Portcullis that night Farthingale ordered a gig to be ready at daylight.

It might have been thought that with this unexpected gain, Basset would be in clover. But he, too, had his troubles and vexations. John Audley's death and Mary's loneliness had made drafts on his time as well as on his heart. For a week he had almost withdrawn from the contest, and when he returned to it it was to find that the extreme men—as is the way of extreme

men—had been active. In his address and in his speeches he had declared himself a follower of Peel. He had posed as ready to take off the corn-tax to meet an emergency, but not as convinced that free trade was always and everywhere right. He had striven to keep the question of Irish famine to the front, and had constantly stated that that which moved his mind was the impossibility of taxing food in one part of the country while starvation reigned in another. Above all, he had tried to convey to his hearers his notion of Peel. He had pictured the statesman's dilemma as facts began to coerce him. He had showed that in the same position many would have preferred party to country and consistency to patriotism. He had painted the struggle which had taken place in the proud man's mind. He had praised the decision to which Peel had come, to sacrifice his name, his credit, and his popularity to his country's good.

But when Basset returned to his Committee Room, he found that the men to whom Free Trade was the whole truth, and to whom nothing else was the truth, had stolen a march on him. They had said much which he would not have said. They had set up Cobden where he had set up Peel. To crown all, they had arranged an open-air meeting, and invited a man from Lancashire—whose name was a red rag to the Tories—to speak at it.

Basset was angry, but he could do nothing. He had an equal distaste for the man and the meeting, but his supporters, elated by their prospects, were neither to coax nor hold. For a few hours he thought of retiring. But to do so at the eleventh hour would not only expose him to obloquy and injure the cause, but it would condemn him to an inaction from which he shrank.

For all that he had seen of Mary, and all that he had done for her, had left him only the more restless and the more unhappy. To one in such a mood success, which began to seem possible, promised something—a new sphere, new interests, new friends. In the hurly-burly of the House and amid the press of business, the wound that pained him would heal more quickly than in the retirement of Blore; where the evenings would be long and lonely, and many a time Mary's image would sit beside his fire and regret would gnaw at his heart.

The open-air meeting was to be held at the Maypole, in the wide street bordered by quaint cottages, that served the town for a cattle-market. The day turned out to be mild for the season, the meeting was a novelty, and a few minutes before three the

Committee began to assemble in strength at the Institute, which stood no more than a hundred yards from the Maypole, but in another street. Hatton was entertaining Brierly, the speaker from Lancashire, and in making him known to the candidate, betrayed a little too plainly that he thought that he had scored a point.

' You'll see something new now, sir,' he said, rubbing his hands. ' What's wanting, he'll win ! He's addressed as many as four thousand persons at one time, Mr. Brierly has ! '

' Ay, and not such as are here, Squire,' Brierly boomed. He was a tall, bulky man with an immense chin, who moved his whole body when he turned his head. ' Not country clods, but Lancashire men ! No throwing dust i' their eyes ! '

' Still, I hope you'll deal with us gently,' Basset said. ' Strong meat, Mr. Brierly, is not for babes. We must walk before we can run.'

' Nay, but the emptier the stomach, the more need o' meat ! ' Brierly replied, and he rumbled with laughter. ' An' a bellyful I'll give them ! Truth's truth and I'm no liar ! '

' But to different minds the same words do not convey the same thing,' Basset urged.

The man stared over his stiff neck-cloth. ' That'd not go down i' Todmorden,' he said. ' Nor i' Burnley nor i' Bolton ! We're down-right chaps up North, and none for chopping words. Hands off the hands' loaf, is Lancashire gospel, and we're out to preach it ! We're out to preach it, and them that clems folk and fats pheasants may make what mouth o'er it they like ! '

Fortunately the order to start came at this moment, and Basset had to fall in and move forward with Hatton, the chairman of the day. Banfield followed with the stranger, and the rest of the Committee followed two by two, the smaller men enjoying the company in which they found themselves. So they marched solemnly into the street, a score of Hatton's men forming a guard of honour, and a long tail of the riff-raff of the town falling in with orange flags and favours. These at a certain signal set up a shrill cheer, a band struck up ' See the Conquering Hero Comes ! ' and the sixteen gentlemen marched, some proudly and some shamefacedly, into the wider street, wherein a cart drawn up at the foot of the Maypole awaited them.

On such occasions Englishmen out of uniform do not show well.

The daylight streamed without pity on the Committee as they stalked or shambled along in their Sunday clothes, and Basset, at least, felt the absurdity of the position. With the tail of his eye he discerned that the stranger was taking off a large white hat, alternately to the right and left, in acknowledgment of the cheers of the crowd, while ominous sniggers of laughter mingled here and there with the applause. Banfield's men, with another hundred or so of the town idlers, were gathered about the cart, but of the honest and intelligent voters there were scanty signs.

The crowd greeted the appearance of each of the principals with cheers and a shaft or two of Stafford wit.

'Hooray! Hooray!' shouted Hatton's men as he climbed into the cart.

'Hatton's a great man now!' a bass voice threw in.

'But he's never lost his taste for tripe!' squeaked a shrill treble. The gibe won roars of laughter, and the back of the chairman's neck grew crimson.

'Hurrah for Banfield and the poor man's loaf!' shouted his supporters, as he mounted in his turn.

'It's little of the crumb he'll leave the poor man!' squeaked the treble.

It was the candidate's turn to mount next. 'Hooray! Hooray!' shouted the crowd with special fervour. Handkerchiefs were waved from windows, the band played a little more of the 'Conquering Hero.'

As the music ceased, 'What's he doing, Tommy, along o' these chaps?' asked the treble voice.

'He's waiting for that there Samaritan, Sammy?' answered the bass.

'Ay, ay? And the wine and oil, Sammy?'

It took the crowd a little time to digest this, but in time they did, and the gust of laughter that followed covered the appearance of the stranger. He was not to escape, however, for as the noise ceased, 'Is this the Samaritan, Sammy?' asked the bass.

'Where's your eyes?' whined the treble. 'He's the big loaf! and, lor, ain't he crumby!'

'If I were down there——' the Burnley man began, leaning over the side of the cart.

'He's crusty, too!' cried the wit.

But this was too much for the Chairman. 'Silence! Silence!' he cried, and, as at a signal, there was a rush, the two interrupters

were seized and, surrounded by a gang of hobbledehoys, were hustled down the road, fighting furiously and shouting 'Blues! Blues!'

The Chairman made use of the lull to step to the edge of the cart and take off his hat.

'Gentlemen,' he began, 'free and independent electors of our ancient borough! At a crisis such as this, a crisis the most momentous—the most momentous'—he paused and looked into his hat—'that history has known, when the very staff of life is, one may say, the apple of discord, it is an honour to me to take the chair!'

'The cart you mean!' cried a voice, 'you're in the cart!'

The speaker cast a withering glance in the direction whence the voice came, lost his place and, failing to find it, went on in a different strain. 'I'm a business man,' he said, 'you all know that! I'm a business man, and I'm not ashamed of it. I stick to my business and my business to-day——'

'Better go on with it!'

But he was getting set, and he was not to be abashed. 'My business to-day,' he repeated pompously, 'is to ask your attention for the distinguished candidate who seeks your suffrages, and for the—the distinguished gentleman on my left who will presently follow me.'

A hollow groan checked him at this point, but he recovered himself. 'First, however,' he continued, 'I propose, with your permission, to say a word on the—the great question of the day—if I may call it so. It is to the food of the people I refer!'

He paused for cheers, under cover of which Banfield murmured to his neighbour that Hatton was set now for half an hour. He had yet to learn that open-air meetings have their advantages.

'The food of the people!' Hatton repeated, uplifted by the applause. 'It is to me a sacred thing! My friends, it is to me the Ark of the Covenant. The bread is the life. It should go straight, untaxed, untouched from the field of the farmer to the house of—of the widow and the orphan!'

'Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear!' Then, 'What about the miller?'

'It should go from where it is grown,' Hatton repeated, 'to where it is needed; from where it is grown to the homes of the poor! And to the man,' slipping easily and fatally into his Sunday vein, 'that lays his 'and upon it, let him be whom he may, I say with the

Book, off ! Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn ! The Law, ay, and the Prophets——'

'Ay, Hatton's profits ! Hands off them !' roared the bass voice.

'Low bread and high profits !' shrieked the treble. 'Hatton and thirty per cent !'

A gust of laughter swept all away for a time, and when the speaker could again get a hearing he had lost his thread and his temper. 'That's a low insinuation !' he cried, crimson in the face. 'I scorn to answer it !'

'Regular old Puseyite you be,' shouted a new tormentor. 'Quoting Scripture.'

Hatton shook his fist at the crowd. 'A low, dirty insinuation !' he cried. 'I scorn——'

'You don't scorn the profits !'

'Listen ! Silence !' Then, 'I shall not say another word ! You're not worth it ! You're below it ! I call on Mr. Brierly of Manchester to propose a resolution.'

And casting vengeful glances here and there where he fancied he detected an opponent, he stood back. He began for the first time to think the meeting a mistake. Basset, who had held that opinion from the first, scanned the crowd and had his misgivings.

The man from Manchester, however, had none. He stood forward, a smile on his broad face, his chest thrown forward, a something easy in his air, as became one who had confronted thousands and was not to be put out of countenance by a few hisses. He waited good-humouredly for silence. Nor could he see that, behind the cart, there had been gathering for some time a band of men of a different air from those who faced the platform. These men were still coming up by twos and threes, issuing from side-streets ; men clad in homespun and with ruddy faces, men in smocked frocks, men in velveteens ; a few with belcher neckerchiefs and slouched felts, whom their mothers would not have known. When Brierly raised his hand and opened his mouth there were over two score of these men—and they were still coming up.

But Brierly was unaware of them, and, complacent and confident of the effect he would produce, he opened his mouth.

'Gentlemen,' he began. His voice, strong and musical, reached the edge of the meeting. 'Gentlemen, free electors ! And I tell you straight no man is free, no man had ought to be free——'

Boom ! and again, Boom ! Boom ! Not four paces behind him a drum rolled heavily, drowning his voice. He stopped, his mouth

open ; for an instant surprise held the crowd also. Then laughter swept the meeting and supplied a treble to the drum's persistent bass.

And still the drum went on, Boom ! Boom ! amid cheers, yells, laughter. Then, as suddenly as it had started, it stopped. More slowly, the hurrahs, yells, laughter, died down, the laughter the last to fail, for not only had the big man's face of surprise tickled the crowd, but the drum had so nicely taken the pitch of his voice that the interruption seemed even to his friends a joke.

He seized the opportunity, but defiance not complacency was now his note. ' Gentlemen,' he said, ' it's funny, but you don't drum me down, let me tell you ! You don't drum me down ! What I said I'm going to say again, and shame the devil and the landlords ! Free men——'

But he did not say it. Boom, boom, rolled the drum, drowning his voice beyond hope. And this time, with the fourth stroke, a couple of fifes struck into a sprightly measure, and the next moment three score lively voices were roaring :

' You've here the little Peeler,  
Out of place he will not go !  
But to keep it, don't he turn about  
And jump Jim Crow !

' But to keep it see him turn about  
And jump Jim Crow !  
Turn about, and wheel about  
And do just so !

*Chorus.*

' The only dance that Robert knows  
Is Jump Jim Crow !  
The only dance that Robert knows  
Is Jump Jim Crow ! '

For a verse or two the singers had it their own way. Then the band of the meeting struck in with ' See the Conquering Hero Comes ! ' and as the airs clashed in discord, the stalwarts of the two parties clashed also in furious struggle. In a twinkling and as by magic the scene changed. Women, children, lads, fled screaming every way. Shrieks of alarm routed laughter. The crowd swayed stormily, flowed this way, ebbed that way. The clatter of staves on clubs rang above oaths and shouts of defiance, as the Yellows made a rush for the drum. Men were down, men were trampled on,

men strove to scale the cart, others strove to descend from it. But to descend from it was to descend into a mêlée of random fists and falling sticks, and the man from Manchester bellowed to stand fast; while Hatton shouted to 'clear out these rogues,' and Banfield called on his men to charge. Basset alone stood silent, measuring the conflict with his eyes. With an odd exultation he felt his spirits rise to meet the need.

He saw quickly that the orange favours were outnumbered, and were giving way; and almost as quickly that, so far as mischief was meant, it was aimed at the Manchester man. He was a stranger, he was the delegate of the League, he was a marked man. Already there were cries to duck him. Basset tapped Banfield on the shoulder.

'They'll not touch us,' he shouted in the man's ear, 'but we must get Brierly away. There's Pritchard's house opposite. We must fight our way to it. Pass the word!' Then to Brierly, 'Mr. Brierly, we must get you away. There's a gang here means mischief.'

'Let them come on!' cried the Manchester man, 'I'm not afraid.'

'No, but I am,' Basset replied. 'We're responsible, and we'll not have you hurt here. Down all!' he cried raising his voice, as he saw the band whom he had already marked, pressing up to the cart through the mêlée—they moved with the precision of a disciplined force, and most of their faces were muffled. 'Down all!' he shouted. 'Yellows to the rescue! Down before they upset us!'

The leaders scrambled out of the cart, some panic-stricken, some enjoying the scuffle. They were only just in time. The Yellows were in flight, amid yells and laughter, and before the last of the platform was over the side, the cart was tipped up by a dozen sturdy arms. Hatton and another were thrown down, but a knot of their men, the last with fight in them, rallied to the call, plucked the two to their feet, and, striking out manfully, covered the rear of the retreating force.

The men with the belcher neckerchiefs pressed on silently, brandishing their clubs, and twice with cries of 'Down him! Down him!' made a rush for Brierly, striking at him over the shoulders of his companions. But it was plain that the assailants shrank from coming to blows with the local magnates; and Basset, seeing this, handed Brierly over to an older man, and himself fell back to cover the retreat.

'Fair play, men,' he cried, good humouredly. And he laughed in their faces as he fell back before them. 'Fair play! You're too many for us to-day, but wait till the polling-day!'

They hooted him. 'Yah! Yah!' they cried. 'You'd ruin the land that bred you! You didn't ought to be there! Give us that fustian rascal! We'll club him!'

'Who makes cloth o' devil's dust?' yelled another. 'Yah! You d—d cotton-spawn!'

Basset laughed in their faces, but he was not sorry when the friendly doorway received his party. The country gang, satisfied with their victory, began to fall back after breaking a dozen panes of glass; and the panting and discomfited Yellows, thronging the passage and pulling their coats into shape, were free to exchange condolences or recriminations as they pleased. More than one had been against the open-air meeting, and Hatton, a sorry figure, hatless, and with a sprained knee, was not likely to hear the end of it. Two or three had black eyes, one had lost two teeth, another his hat, and Brierly his note-book.

But almost before a word had been exchanged, a man pushed his way among them. He had slipped into the house by the back way. 'For God's sake, gentlemen,' he cried, 'get the constable, or there'll be murder!'

'What is it?' asked a dozen voices.

'They've got Ben Bosham, half a hundred of them! They're away to the canal with him. They're that mad with him they'll drown him!'

So far Basset had treated the affair as a joke. But Bosham's plight in the hands of a mob of angry farmers seemed more than a joke. Murder might really be done. He snatched a thick stick from a corner—he had been hitherto unarmed—and raised his voice. 'Mr. Banfield,' he said, 'go to Stubbs and tell him what is doing! He can control them if anyone can. And do some of you, gentlemen, come with me! We must get him from them.'

'But we're not enough,' a man protested.

'The man must not be murdered,' Basset replied. 'Come, gentlemen, they'll not dare to touch us who know them, and we've the law with us! Come on!'

'Well done, squire!' cried Brierly. 'You're a man!'

'Ay, but I'm not man enough to take you!' Basset retorted. 'You stay here, please!'

(To be continued.)

*MATTHEW ARNOLD.**THE MAN AND HIS WORK.*

BY A. G. LEGARD.

IT is now rather more than thirty years since Matthew Arnold died, without doubt one of the most interesting personalities of the mid-Victorian era. I first saw him when he was lecturing at Oxford as Professor of Poetry. This professorship he held from 1857 to 1867 ; and towards the end of that period I was an undergraduate at Balliol. I shall never forget his appearance as he stalked into the lecture room accompanied by his little son in a velvet suit—I remember this detail as if it were yesterday—how with that delightful air of self-confidence which became him so well, he took off his college cap, and then put it on again ; for it was etiquette for a Professor to lecture with his head covered. Tall, erect, with curly black hair, a well-poised head, and powerful face, he would have been a striking figure in any assembly. The subject of the lectures that he was then delivering was ‘The Study of Celtic Literature.’ He began in a characteristic way :

‘ Some time ago I spent some weeks at Llandudno on the Welsh coast. The best lodging houses at Llandudno look towards Liverpool . . . perhaps the view on this side disstisfies one after a little while. At last one turns round and looks westward. Everything is changed. Over the mouth of the Conway and its sands is the eternal softness and mild light of the west : the low line of the mystic Anglesey, and the precipitous Penmaenmawr, and the great group of Carnedd Llewellyn and Carnedd David and their brethren fading away hill behind hill in an aerial haze make the horizon ; between the foot of Penmaenmawr and the bending coast of Anglesey, the sea, a silver stream disappears one knows not whither.’

After this beautiful description of scenery Arnold introduced a prosaic element as a foil.

‘ As I walked up and down and listening with curiosity to the strange unfamiliar speech—bathing people, vegetable sellers, and donkey boys—who were all about me, I heard through the stream of unknown Welsh, words not English indeed, but still familiar. They came from a French nursery-maid with some children. Profoundly ignorant of her relationship this Gaulish Celt moved among

her British cousins speaking her polite New Latin tongue, and full of compassionate contempt probably for the Welsh barbarians and their jargon. What a revolution was here !'

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At the mention of the nursery-maid I remember what a ripple of laughter went through the audience. It was all very amusing, but it must be confessed that this particular set of lectures was one of the least valuable that he delivered as Professor, for he never troubled to learn Welsh or Erse, and could not speak of the Celtic Literature from firsthand knowledge.

The next time that I saw him was in 1871 when I had left Oxford, and had just been appointed one of H.M. Inspectors of Schoo's under the new regulations, consequent upon the passing of the Education Act of 1870.

Here I should mention that up to that time there were clerical inspectors for Church of England schools, Roman Catholic inspectors for Roman Catholic schools, and lay inspectors for British and Nonconformist schools.

Arnold was one of the old lay inspectors, and the old régime had not quite come to an end when I was told off as a raw recruit to see how one of the veterans did his business. The scene of operations was one of those old square Wesleyan schools, built mainly for Sunday School purposes, the galleries overlooking the floor, and packed with children, for it was situated in a poor and populous district in the East End of London. Such school premises would have shocked our present educational reformers, but in those days 'My Lords' (as the Education Department was then called) were easily satisfied.

It was not until the morning was well advanced that Matthew Arnold put in an appearance. I fear that I did not learn much from my tutor, for it is no secret that the routine work of school inspection was distasteful to him.

Some years before (1859) he had written to his sister Mrs. Forster, on being appointed a Foreign Commissioner :

' You know that I have no special interest in the subject of public education. I shall for five months get free from the routine work of it, of which I sometimes feel very sick.'

He certainly on this occasion did not take matters very seriously. After a decent interval the children were sent home, and we adjourned for lunch to the house of a leading Wesleyan layman in the district.

Arnold took me in hand in a most friendly manner and introduced me to the worthy Wesleyans who were to be our hosts.

In those days the annual school inspection was a sort of gala day, and the Wesleyan Day School Committees used to entertain the Government Inspector at a meal which it would be quite a misnomer to call a lunch. It has been remarked by some of Matthew Arnold's critics that familiarity with this particular type of middle-class Englishman, whose hospitality he often shared, may have coloured his writings, and given rise to some of those Arnoldian phrases with which we are so familiar.

At the time of which I am writing 'Culture and Anarchy' had been written, but the 'Dissidence of Dissent' and the 'Protestantism of the Protestant Religion' did not seem to rankle in the breasts of our Nonconformist friends, for Mr. Arnold was treated with no stinted measure of appreciative consideration. It is true that the mode in which he was addressed rather jarred upon him. 'Have some more veal, Doctor?' 'Pass the potatoes to the Doctor.' 'Hannah, give the Doctor some more ginger-beer?' <sup>1</sup>

They thought no doubt that a D.C.L. of Oxford should always be addressed by his proper title.

'Why did they persist in calling me Doctor?' he said to me after luncheon was over. 'I shall never see them again or I should have remonstrated.'

As we walked back to the Cannon Street Station together, I remember how Mr. Arnold talked to me of the literary beauty of portions of Isaiah, and how desirable it was that pupil teachers should learn some of these passages for recitation.

Curiously enough these extracts have been recommended in recent years as suitable for recitation by the authorities of the Board of Education.

The next time that I saw Matthew Arnold was at Oxford in the year 1877. There was a great gathering of old Balliol men to celebrate the opening of the new Hall, and Jowett presided at the dinner which was memorable for the presence of many men distinguished in various walks of life. The chief guest was Archbishop Tait, an old Balliol tutor; Law was represented by Lord Coleridge

<sup>1</sup> To explain this we must remember that he had lately been made a D.C.L. of his own University, a distinction that greatly pleased him. *His inclusion in the list* is, he thinks, 'owing to the accident of a young and original sort of man—Lord Salisbury, having drawn up the names on the honours' list' (*Letters*, vol. ii. p. 31).

'the silver tongued,' and Mr. Bowen, and Matthew Arnold was there as a Balliol scholar of thirty years previously, and at that time perhaps the most brilliant man of letters that England possessed. In the speeches that followed the dinner he was in his happiest vein.

In a most amusing way he contrasted himself with the Archbishop, the unsuccessful Balliol man with the successful one, and compared the dusty paths which he had to tread to the pleasant surroundings that fell to the lot of the Primate of the English Church.<sup>1</sup>

Some years elapsed before I saw Matthew Arnold again. The occasion was a solemn one. Mr. W. E. Forster, the statesman, Matthew Arnold's brother-in-law, had died, and his body had been brought down from London to be buried at Burley in Wharfedale, the Yorkshire home which he loved so well.

I was a personal friend of Mr. Forster's partner, and before the funeral I met Matthew Arnold at luncheon, and had a few words with him.

It was a memorable scene. Mr. Forster had been M.P. for Bradford, the great manufacturing town a few miles from Burley, and his constituents turned out in their thousands to pay the last token of respect to the rugged Yorkshireman who had never prophesied smooth things to them, and had been bitterly estranged politically from some of their number in the contests over the Education Act. The crowds who assembled on that day showed how deeply Mr. Forster was respected by political friend and foe alike.

Among the mourners, the most interesting figure to me was Matthew Arnold. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast than that between Matthew Arnold and W. E. Forster; one, the sturdy brusque democrat, keenly interested in all popular movements; the other, the 'aristocrat to his finger-tips,' the polished man of letters, who held himself aloof from the politics of the day. Yet to both these men in different ways English Education at the present day owes much.

Mr. Forster's death took place in 1886, and in that year Matthew Arnold resigned his inspectorship. He only survived that event two years, and died very suddenly from heart failure in 1888.

<sup>1</sup> At any Oxford gathering, Matthew Arnold was sure of a warm welcome, for he loved Oxford, and Oxford men in their turn appreciated the man who could write as he did of that 'beautiful city, so venerable, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene . . . the home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs . . . the Queen of Romance.'

During the interval he gave occasional lectures on literary and other subjects. At one of these delivered before the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society I was present, and though I do not remember the subject I quite recall my feeling of disappointment. He had none of the gifts of a popular lecturer, and one can easily understand that the lecturing tour which he undertook in America was not a success.

But what did the lecture matter ?

The man was everything, the lecture nothing.

No doubt many members of that Leeds audience who are still alive, and are enthusiastic admirers of his writings, think themselves fortunate in being able to say, as Goethe once said about something else, ‘ Matthew Arnold is no longer to me an empty sound.’

In these rather unconnected remarks I have endeavoured to jot down a few personal impressions of Arnold as a man, and these, though very slight, may be interesting from the fact that they are first hand.

However excellent memoirs and biographies may be, they can only give an imperfect idea to those who have not been brought into personal relation with their subject. Lockhart’s biography is one of the best that was ever written, but if one could have spoken to the great Sir Walter for five minutes, how vastly our familiarity with a man whom many of us look upon as a dear friend would have been enhanced.

No life of Matthew Arnold has been written, but Professor Saintsbury not many years after his death wrote a study of him, and in 1902 Mr. Herbert Paul wrote the volume ‘ Matthew Arnold’ in the English Men of Letters series. These books were written from the outside point of view ; something of his inner life however has been most charmingly depicted for us by the two volumes of ‘ Letters ’ edited by Mr. G. W. E. Russell ; the letters however were carefully pruned before being given to the public, and only give us an incomplete idea of his life. Still, they show us an aspect of Arnold’s nature from the inside that was little understood by those who only knew him as a writer and a lecturer. A certain affectation of manner, that he seemed to assume on public occasions, was quite on the surface, and in familiar circles it played about him in the form of a mock solemnity and seeming despair, which he put on when he let one of his continual jets of humour bubble out—as often as not something whimsical about himself.

His letters reveal him to be a most affectionate son, father,

husband, brother ; and his family life was evidently of the happiest. The premature death of two of his sons was a bitter grief to him —on the day after the death of one of them Mr. G. W. E. Russell found him deriving solace from some favourite passage in ‘Marcus Aurelius’ —yet his nature was a buoyant one, and he never gave way to morbid repining. There are entries in his note-book as follows :

‘ November 23. Tommy died. “ Leva igitur faciem tuam in cœlum.” ’

‘ November 28. Tommy’s funeral. “ Awake thou lute and harp : I myself will awake right early.” ’

#### What were his recreations ?

He was fond of exercise, and if he had been born twenty years later would certainly have been devoted to golf. He occasionally was asked to a country house to shoot, but owns that he was a very bad shot. In the milder sport of fishing, he seemed to have passed many pleasant hours, and in his longer vacations he travelled a good deal abroad.

The one recreation that connects the man with his writings was his fondness for natural history, especially for wild flowers. This taste was shared by his youngest sister, and was a good deal strengthened by his friendship with Mr. Grant Duff (as he then was), who kept up in Arnold his own delight in botany, though Arnold’s botanising was always rather of a desultory nature.

Writing from Oxford to his wife in 1854, he says :

‘ On Thursday I got up alone into one of the little combs that papa was so fond of, and which I had in my mind in the “ Scholar Gipsy.” ’

Students of his poetry will remember the passage :

‘ Screened is this nook, o’er the high half-reaped field  
And here till sundown, shepherd ! will I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep :  
And air swept lindens yield  
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun with shade :  
And the eye travels down to Oxford towers.’

‘ Scholar Gipsy,’ Stanza iii.

And again, the passage from ‘ Thyrsis ’ about the—

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'track by Childsworth Farm  
 Past the high wood, to where the Elm Tree crowns  
 The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames ?  
 The signal elm that looks on Iksley Downs,  
 The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames.'

The 'signal elm' is now the object of many a Sunday pilgrimage from Oxford.

Fond as he was of country walks, particularly in the neighbourhood of Fox Howe near Ambleside, where he spent so much time, it can hardly be said that Matthew Arnold was a genuine lover of the country, as Wordsworth was.

In an amusing article about poets and the country life *The Times* once quoted an extract from Lord Morley's 'Life of Gladstone.'

"‘I once said to Matthew Arnold,’ said Lord Morley, ‘that I would rather have been Wordsworth than anybody,’” and Arnold who knew Wordsworth well, replied, “‘Oh no, you wouldn’t, you would wish you were dining with me at the Athenæum. Wordsworth was too much of a peasant for you.’”

“‘With Arnold,’ continues the *Times*, “‘there was always the Athenæum in the background, the nights and suppers of the gods, the society of wits and other congenial spirits.’”

This I think is no doubt true. Matthew Arnold was in no sense a recluse ; he was fond of society, and a brilliant talker, and was a welcome guest in houses where he met some of the most distinguished men of his day. He was frequently at Aston Clinton, where Sir Anthony de Rothschild lived, and sometimes met Dizzy, who chaffed him across the dinner table about ‘Sweetness and Light.’<sup>1</sup> He is pleased to hear that Lord John Russell has called him one of the most rising poets of the day, but of Gladstone he always seems to have had a certain distrust.

The work in which nearly the whole of Arnold’s life was spent was that of an Inspector of Schools. After filling the office of private secretary to the Lord Lansdowne of the day, he was appointed at the age of twenty-nine to an inspectorship of schools, a post which he held for thirty-five years.

As I mentioned before, until 1871 he was one of the old lay inspectors, and after that date he had, as he says himself, a very pleasant district of his own, the borough of Westminster and some country, including Harrow, where for some time he lived.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 23.

Mr. Paul is no doubt right in saying that the Department treated him with great indulgence, but, after all, his letters show that he found the work one of great drudgery, and it was never congenial to him.

Red tape was an abhorrence to a man of his disposition, and he chafed against the somewhat irksome regulations of the Education Department.

On one occasion when he was asked in an official minute why he had not stayed the night at Edmonton instead of coming home, he wrote the following answer on the minute :

'John Gilpin would not stay at Edmonton, so why should I ?'

There were, however, compensations.

In virtue of his office as Inspector he was selected by the heads of the Department on different occasions to visit the Continent, and report upon foreign schools and systems. This work he thoroughly enjoyed. He was brought into contact with foreign statesmen and officials, and was a pioneer in what may be termed the intelligence branch of the Education Office, which in late years has developed so much under the guidance of Professor Sadler and others.

It is true that Arnold's voice was for a long time that of one 'crying in the wilderness,' but his views are now generally recognised as sound, especially as regards the function of the State.

The work was thoroughly congenial to him, and his reports aroused much attention. It is true they did not bear fruit immediately : for England has ever been slow to move in such matters, but it is not too much to say that the many secondary schools that have sprung into being all over England owe their origin to the sermons that Matthew Arnold was never weary of preaching on the text 'Organise your secondary education.'

We know that almost all Arnold's poetry was written when he was a comparatively young man, and during his later years his pen was devoted to other subjects. One reason for this he himself gives.

He points out in a letter to his sister<sup>1</sup> that Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron had been able to give their whole lives to poetry, and the same was the case with his own contemporary, Tennyson, but it was not so with himself. His existence is so hampered with

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. i. p. 58.

work that a tremendous effort is required to produce his best. He says :

' Perfection of a certain kind there may be, but to attain perfection in the region of thought and feeling and to write this with perfection of form demands an actual tearing of oneself to pieces.'

This is no doubt true, but as one reads of his dining out in London five nights in a week, and of other distractions, it is clear that official work was not the only impediment to the writing of poetry.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the late Mr. Stopford Brooke's Essay on Arnold in his book 'The Four Poets' is the earlier part in which he analyses the spirit that underlies so much of Arnold's poetry and shows how the pessimism, the melancholy stream that pervades it is due to his Stoic temperament, in which from despair about the world around he retires into the solitude of his own soul, where even the 'Second Best,' short of other idealistic flights, is a high and splendid thing.

' Who through all he meets can steer him,  
Can reject what cannot clear him,  
Cling to what can truly cheer him ;  
Who each day more surely learns  
That an impulse, from the distance  
Of his deepest, best existence,  
To the words, "Hope, Light, Persistence,"  
Strongly sets and truly burns.'

The times at that period were out of joint.

The first poems were published in 1849, the year after the great revolutionary events in Europe, some of which he watched from a window in Paris, when private secretary to Lord Lansdowne. Arnold, unlike his friend Clough, had no sympathy with the popular movements. He disliked all the disturbance and noise that accompanied them, and these, as Mr. Brooke says, drove him into a longing for solitude, and for calm outside the tortured world.

His sonnet expresses this thought :

' One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
One lesson, which in every wind is blown ;  
One lesson of two duties kept at one  
Though the loud word proclaim their enmity  
Of toil unsevered from tranquillity.'

Mr. Brooke points out that his desire was to steal apart from fierce explosions like the Revolution, but he forgot that sometimes Nature works by explosions.

Another influence of those times was the religious controversy that was then raging at Oxford. He had no sympathy with the Oxford movement, but was profoundly moved by the critical spirit that was then making itself heard. He became a 'Modernist' before the term was invented, but stayed within his old Church and its liturgies, while reforming its meanings from within.

Instead of quoting from poems written in a minor key, I prefer to part company with Matthew Arnold when he was writing in more cheerful vein the beautiful lines from 'Rugby Chapel':

'Ye, like angels, appear  
Radiant with ardour divine !

Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, reinspire the brave !  
Order, courage, return.  
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
Follow your steps as ye go,  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
'Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the city of God.'

*THE STORY OF THE 'BIRMINGHAM.'*<sup>1</sup>

BY LEWIS R. FREEMAN.

To all the units of the Grand Fleet there had just been flashed a signal ordering them to prepare to proceed to sea 'with all dispatch'; and in the quiet interval which preceded the weighing of anchor the Commander had joined me for a few minutes on the quarter-deck to watch the lighter craft—always at 'shorter notice' than the battleships—steaming past in seemingly unending lines towards the 'exit' from our base. The destroyers appeared almost countless as they streamed seaward, shoal on shoal; and even the leanly purposeful light cruisers passed by in squadron after squadron. The Grand Fleet, in its full strength, I had seen many times; but never before had the disposition of things been such as to offer an opportunity to behold the first forerunning flings of the screening-net which that fleet threw out to mask its movements in the seas which it was about to sweep for the ever elusive enemy.

'Not much like it was in those first months of the War,' said the Commander, running his eye approvingly over the miles of moving ships. 'Destroyer or light cruiser, there is probably not a single one of these scores of smaller craft you see in motion that was in commission in August, 1914. The almost endless usefulness of the light cruiser was one of the things which had not been foreseen in time, and we went into the War with hardly more than a bare squadron of ships of this class, where now we have—well, those you have seen going past for the last hour are by no means the major part of them. Yet there was just as much work for such craft then as now: indeed, for a while, there was more; for there were still many German merchant vessels at sea, as well as a number of cruisers and commerce destroyers. The consequence was that all the endless duties that are now performed by these specially-built ships you see here, and many more like them, fell to the lot of what were not, for some time after the outbreak of the War, two complete light cruiser squadrons. The First L.C.S., consisting of five or six ships of the "Town class," under Commodore Goodenough, had pretty much the whole of the North Sea for its field of operations: the only area it was not called upon to cover being the southern end, for which Commodore Tyrwhitt—with (at first) only an "Arethusa" or two and a number of large destroyers—looked after from Harwich.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright in U.S.A.

'It was my fortune to be with the First L.C.S. during all its most strenuous days: days of which my strongest surviving recollections are of fog and wind and rain in the North Sea, interspersed at irregular intervals with feverishly rushed coalings at whatever was the handiest base, and illuminated with the high lights of an occasional brush with the Hun. It was a hard life for the men, but harder still, perhaps, for the ships. Some of the men were killed, some of the ships were sunk; yet I am glad to say that the most of both are still going strong.'

'The Commodore flew his pennant from the *Southampton*, which, with the *Birmingham*, *Nottingham*, and *Lovestoft* (all approximately contemporaneous in point of launching), were the latest of the "Town" class in commission at the outbreak of the War. I was Commander of the *Birmingham*. She differed in a number of respects from these new light cruisers: in all of which have been embodied, of course, from one to three years of practical war service experience. She was larger, but not so fast as these new ships, and her guns—but here she comes; you can make the comparison for yourself. The old "Town" class are still at their old work, and still keeping up to the mark with the best of the new ones.'

I looked where he pointed, and saw that one of the last of the remaining squadrons of light cruisers had just weighed anchor, swung out into the stream, and was heading up to pass us.

'That's the *Birmingham*,' said the Commander, 'and that's the *Dublin*, and that's the *Southampton*. They're the only ones of the old First L.C.S. that happen to be working together just at present, though not quite the only survivors. The *Nottingham* and *Falmouth* have gone, though,—torpedoed on the same day—and possibly one of the others. It's fit enough she looks still, after all her heaven only knows how many thousands of miles of steaming since the War started,' he continued as the *Birmingham* glided up abeam of us. 'I never saw her look smarter or fitter. You'd never believe, to see her now, that those trim bows had once been all bent and scarred where they had cut through a U-boat—the first to be rammed in the War—and that that fine run of quarter-deck had been smashed down and buckled up by a mountainous sea that "pooped" her one night in a storm off the Norwegian coast. But those were only incidents in a period of nearly two years, from the outbreak of the War up to the time that Jutland put a final quietus on the surface activity of the Huns' cruisers, that was compact of little else but incidents. From the second year, however, the increasing number of new British light cruisers, and the decreasing enterprise of the

Germans, made the demands on the surviving pre-War cruisers less severe ; but though still hard-worked, these will never again be called upon for anything like the service they put in at the beginning.'

'What was that about ramming the first submarine ?' I took the opportunity to ask ; for though I had heard of the incident before, the details had always eluded me.

'I shall have to tell you about that later,' replied the Commander, looking at his watch and turning to ascend the ladder of the forecastle deck. 'It's time to be shortening in now. Look in at my cabin after dinner, if there's nothing in the wind outside tonight. There may be a chance for a bit of a yarn before I turn in.'

A mist-quenched sunset had merged into the inky blackness of a typical North Sea night, when I came down from the fore-bridge at nine o'clock, and the dank chill of it lapped clamminly through the ward-room and the unheated and scantily ventilated after-flats. The Commander, still in his sea-boots, sought solace in a cigarette and the light of a so-called electric heater for the genial warmth of a coal fire which had to be doused at sea. 'Come in out of the cold !' he called ironically in answer to my knock. 'This thing looks warm, at any rate ; so just keep your eyes fixed on it and imagine it's a fire. Have a cigarette ? Did I ever show you this case before ? It was one of a number of similar prizes the Kaiser put up for some races we had during our visit to Kiel, a month before the outbreak of the War. This came to me for the cutter race, which we were lucky enough to win for the *Birmingham*.'

'Rather a striking change, wasn't it,' I asked, 'from being the feted guest of the Kaiser one month and chivvying his ships off or under the North Sea the next ?'

'It was indeed,' he replied with a smile. 'And that was a jolly pleasant week at Kiel, too. They couldn't have treated us better ; and there's no use denying that, until they began to develop into these U-boat swine, one found much to admire, and even to like, in the German naval officers. Those of the cruisers seemed an especially good sort, and they gave one the impression of being far less under the curse of "Junkerism" than the army officers one met. You're quite right ; it was a change from Kiel, with its flags and Fräuleine and floods of sweet champagne, to the North Sea, with the long, stern chases in the fog and the occasional clashes of action—as at Dogger Bank and Heligoland Bight. And, as luck would have it, it was the old First L.C.S. that was in the thick of each.'

'Our first work, following the outbreak of the War, was to scour

the North Sea and sink or capture everything German upon the surface of it. Indeed, I don't know that I could frame any more comprehensive description than that for our work during the whole of the next two years. The submarine incident I referred to occurred early in August, before we knew much of the ways of U-boats, or they of the ways of light cruisers. In fact, at that time, neither the one nor the other can be said to have developed anything approaching distinctive habits or characteristics. We simply stumbled upon each other in the darkness, or rather at the end of the darkness, and did the best we could for ourselves. Luckily, our best was rather better than theirs.

'The encounter seems principally to have been due to the carelessness of the U-boat in the matter of keeping a watch. So far as I know, no one on the *Birmingham* reported seeing anyone on the conning-tower of the submarine when the latter was first sighted, in the half-light of the early morning, on our port-quarter and less than a cable's length distant. If there had been a proper watch by the Huns, they would probably have had the choice of two alternatives: either one of which might have been successful in saving her from the fate which did overtake her. It is hard to see how, if she saw us at all, she could have missed with a torpedo at so short a distance; or, if she was out of the latter, how she could have failed to submerge in time to avoid ramming.

'Since the U-boat was actually somewhat astern of us when she was sighted, there was no way in which the *Birmingham* could get in a position to ram her without turning through sixteen points and circling back almost into her own wake, and this the officer on the bridge gave the order to do. The broadside target we must necessarily have presented during a part of the manœuvring it seems inconceivable that the Hun could have missed, if he had been standing by to launch it. Possibly he did launch it, and his panic or an accident was responsible for giving it a bad aim. At any rate, the wake of no mouldie was reported.

'It must have been the greatly increased vibration of the ship as the helm was put hard-a-starboard that awakened me, for I was already making my way on deck when I felt the shock of impact. It was a stiff sort of jolt, but no heavier than that of a big sea crushing against the weather-bow, and, because there was no great heel to the ship, rather less calculated to disturb one's balance than the latter. A moment later, I had gained the quarter-deck, where, rushing to the port-rail, I was well in time to see the heeling hull of a submarine raking along the side as the *Birmingham*

forged ahead. It was so close that I am sure I could have leaned over and holed its thin hide with a crow-bar, if I had had one. This was before the days of depth-charges and lance-bombs, or we could have finished the thing then and there. As it was, it took one more round to put it out of its misery.

' What had happened was this : Owing to the comparatively close distance of the U-boat, the very shortest circle the *Birmingham* could turn in was not sufficient to bring her round enough to ram the former full and square. The best she could do was to give it a heavy raking blow and glance off astern, and it is this that was happening when I came on deck and discovered the submarine banging along our port side. It was evidently going to be necessary to ram it again, and this—since our bird now appeared to be well winged—there was apparently plenty of time to do properly.

' Steaming in a wider circle, round we came again. I could see no evidences of life on the conning-tower of the heavily heeling U-boat ; but bubbling jets of air and water, spouting on both sides of her, indicated that frantic efforts were being made to "blow" the compensating tanks and submerge—a circumstance that would seem to make it practically certain that she had not been holed by our first blow, and that her skipper was confident of his ability to continue carrying on under water. With plenty of room and plenty of time to manoeuvre in, the *Birmingham* circled to precisely the position she wanted before she tried to ram again, and the second blow drove home squarely amidships. The jar of striking was scarcely sharper than the first had been, although this last time it is probable that we cut the U-boat completely in two and sent the halves to the bottom quite asunder. How fair and true the blow went home was proven by the fact that the scars on both port and starboard bows (as revealed subsequently in the dry dock) were almost mathematically symmetrical. The only wreckage I saw come up was two long slender cylinders—perhaps two feet in diameter by nine feet long—which probably had something to do with the compressed-air supply. These were bobbing in our greasy churned-up wake for some time ; but I never saw anything else come up to join them. The blow of our bows shearing through the U-boat must have had the effect of closing up the ends of the severed sections—something as the blow of an axe bends together the openings of a lead pipe it cuts through—so that little of their floatable contents (including the bodies of the crew) could escape to the surface.

' The *Birmingham*—although the work on hand made it im-

possible for us to learn the extent of her injuries for some time—escaped by no means unscathed from the encounter. Did you ever see a cat, with the final gasp of the last of its nine lives, set its teeth in the nose of the dog that was worrying it to death? Well, that completely dished and done-for U-boat seemed to turn on the *Birmingham* in a good deal the same way. The bows of the ships of the "Town" class are trim and lissome of line; and as those of the *Birmingham* shore like a wedge through the hull of the submarine, the severed sections bent round and—probably under the pressure of the water—bit deep, like a great pair of jaws. The light steel plates of her fore-peak were pinched in and bent in a way that started a heavier leak than we had means to stop, and we finally had to forgo our efforts in that direction, close up the water-tight doors of the bulkhead, and let it go at that. The forty or fifty tons of water that came in really made very little difference in her speed and sea-worthiness—a fortunate circumstance in view of the fact that she had to fight the Battle of Heligoland Bight before there was an opportunity to put her into dry dock. A huge wall of water, which swept her quarter-deck during a storm we encountered off the coast of Norway, one night in September, damaged her so badly that it was no longer safe to carry on, and the occasion was taken advantage of also to restore the bow where it had been "bitten" by the rammed U-boat.

"There were six of the "Town" class cruisers in the squadron at the time of the Heligoland Bight fight, August 28; but only the *Southampton*, *Yarmouth*, and *Birmingham* were engaged in the sinking of the *Mainz*—our principal action there. Smaller than any one of the three of us, we had her hopelessly outmatched from the first; but I have to give her credit for making the pluckiest kind of a fight. We battered her about as we pleased; and in standing in close to her, just before she went down, I had my first opportunity to see the truly terrible effect of British lyddite. Of the terrific "scorching" action of the latter, there was grim evidence in two scarred and naked bodies—probably those of the captain and navigator—which hung over the rail of the bridge. Apparently unscathed from the fragments of a shell which had burst near them, the clothes and hair had been completely consumed by the fierce heat, while the terrific blast of air and gas had slit the flesh of their bodies as though it had been slashed with knives. The battle-cruisers also came in for a part of the action on this occasion; and one of the most remarkable sights I ever witnessed was when the *Lion* almost blew the German light cruiser *Ariadne*

out of the water with a single salvo. We were within ten miles of Heligoland at one time during this action, but it was obscured by the usual North Sea mist and we were denied a sight of it. Of course, it would not—exposed to guns which were supposed to range upwards of thirty miles—have been a healthy place to linger about in on a clear day.

'Perhaps the one most amusing memory I have of a two years whose memories were mostly grim and grey,' continued the Commander, leaning back in his chair with a reminiscent smile, 'is that of Christmas Day, 1914. The ship's company had been preparing for the usual Navy Christmas of feast and frolic when, on the 24th, the Squadron was suddenly ordered to sea. What the stunt was, I don't quite recollect, but believe it had something to do with the sea-plane raid on Cuxhaven, which was made about that time. If you remember how the —th Division weighed anchor and went out into a North Sea storm, last Christmas Day, you will understand how little the mess-decks would let a trifle like a possible action interfere with their holiday festivities. The spirit was quite the same in the Old First L.C.S., only on this occasion, the better to celebrate the first Christmas of the War, the ship's company of the *Birmingham* had planned some kind of a fancy dress "function"—a "Revue" they called it on the bills, I believe.

'As this was away back in those ancient of days when every summons to sea was enthusiastically interpreted as an invitation to foregather with the Huns for "Der Tag," the men, far from being disappointed by the interference with their programme in harbour, were greatly bucked by the promise it seemed to hold out of bringing off a double celebration. "The better the day, the better the deed," they told each other, and "Merry Chris'mus, 'opin' it's 'Dur Tag,'" was the morning's greeting all along the mess-decks. They were ready for the Hun all the time, they said, and so they felt quite free to go on preparing for their Christmas show.

'It was early in the afternoon, I believe, that one of the submarine lookouts reported sighting the wake of a periscope, and instantly the alarm-bell sent every one to "Action Stations."

'Not even in the days when Captain Kidd flew the "Jolly Roger," and terrorised the Spanish Main, can a fighting-ship have been manned by so motley a crew as was the *Birmingham* that Christmas Day. A half-rouged Red Cross nurse, with a purple stocking on one leg and a sea-boot on the other, brought me a signal from the Flagship, and a "grizzly bear" (his hide the remnants of a shaggy collision-mat), rolling along on his "haunches,"

bumped me in a doorway. In an after-flat, I saw a buxom "Red Riding Hood" hurdle handily over a "Wolf" that had slipped on the deck and was blocking her rush for a ladder, and in the waist was a Wild West cowboy, in sombrero and "chaps," helping a "Charlie Chaplin" and a Salvation Army lassie heave up shells and cordite. A spider-legged "Gaby Deslys," with a very imitation ostrich-feather head-dress, cut a grotesque figure swarming up the mast to her station in the fore-top; but perhaps the crowning touch of all was lent by one of the gunners on the fo'c'sle who, stripped to the waist, according to good old British tradition, still retained the blonde Manila hemp ringlets and the pink cotton tights he had worn as a ballet dancer. Perhaps you can understand why it has been one of the regrets of my life that the alarm was not followed by a real action.

'Dogger Bank, which was fought early the following year, was more a battle-cruiser than a light cruiser show. But for the disabling of the *Lion* when the battle was at its height, they would undoubtedly have bagged three or four instead of only one of the enemy battle-cruisers. One or two of those that escaped were blazing to their mast heads as it was; and we were a good deal surprised to learn that they ever were able to reach port. We helped to finish up the winged *Blucher*; and a zeppelin trying to bomb the British destroyers engaged in picking up the former's crew after she had sunk, furnished us an illuminative example of the kind of foe we had to fight in the Hun.

'The year and a-half, or thereabouts, between Dogger Bank and Jutland was almost entirely taken up in the unending succession of sweeps and patrols, to which we had become accustomed in the early months of the War. There was, literally, scarcely a square mile of the North Sea which our propellers did not churn and re-churn in our continuous goings and comings. So completely did the pencilled lines marking our successive courses fill a large scale chart that, finally, we were actually unable to find room in many places for the little circled dots indicating our positions on various days. There were places on the chart where the endlessly intersecting lines looked like the cross-hatching on a heavily shaded pen-and-ink sketch.

'The accelerated launchings of light cruisers in this period had increased the number of ships sufficiently to form additional squadrons by the spring of 1916; but this seemed to make no great difference in our "sea time." About the only change I can recall

was that the "Town" class were now the Second Light Cruiser Squadron instead of the First.

"On the 31st of May, in company with the battle-cruisers, the First and Second Light Cruiser Squadrons and a number of destroyers, we were steaming in the North Sea. Admiral Beatty, in the *Lion*, doubtless knew that the Huns were out, but to us in the light cruisers (with the possible exception of the Commodore), it was just like any other of the countless sweeps we had been making on and off during most of the last two years. We weren't quite as sceptical then as we are now about the Huns coming out; but—well, while we were looking for them (When have we ever ceased to look for them?), there was nothing to indicate that we were going to find them. We know now that Beatty was simply carrying out a long-matured plan for cutting off the enemy from their bases and forcing them to action; but, as I have said, this was not evident to us at the time.

"The first news we had of Huns was when, at about 3.30, the *Galatea* reported what were believed to be two hostile cruisers, and—to the north-east—smoke; supposed to be from a fleet. Immediately afterwards, I noticed the battle-cruisers beginning to increase speed and close up, and, beyond the line of these, a couple of sea-planes were rising from one of our auxiliaries. After completing a hurried survey, they circled off and disappeared to the north, followed by a couple of destroyers—the latter evidently detached to pick them up. We went to "Action Stations," just as we had gone scores of times before when the enemy was believed to be near. When all was ready (as there was still plenty of time), we fell out and went to tea. There is no use in going into action hungry, if it can possibly be avoided. Once a fight is joined, there is no telling for how long one may have to appease his appetite by nibbling at "iron rations." Not that we really expected a fight, however: at this stage of things, we rather looked on the enemy as a small squadron that would put about and head for the Skager-Rak as soon as it became evident to him that he was to be confronted with anything approaching an equality of force.

"When it transpired that the ships on the horizon were five German battle-cruisers, accompanied by a considerable number of light cruisers and destroyers, all heading in a south-easterly direction, it began to look as if they were not going to endeavour to avoid a fight; and it was at this juncture that the Commodore made a highly inspiring signal for the Second L.C.S. to prepare to attack the van of the enemy. From the fact that the Hun

light cruisers kept on the far side of the battle-cruisers, disappearing shortly after firing commenced, it appeared that they did not care to risk them against our heavier ships.

'The *Lion* turned to the south, followed by the *Tiger*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, *Indefatigable*, and *New Zealand*. This manoeuvre was the signal for the battle to begin; for, before the battle-cruisers were finished turning, the enemy opened fire. The low-hanging sun was over our line, so that we were between the light and the ships which were firing at us. With the sun well toward the zenith, this would have been in our favour: as it was, it only had the effect of silhouetting us sharply for the German gunners to range on; while to us their ships were only indifferently lighted blurs against a misty background. It was, I believe, something similar to the light in which Cradock had to fight his hopeless battle at Coronel; only there, he was forced to engage at a disadvantage because the faster German cruisers were able to "jockey" themselves into the better position, while at Jutland—for it was that battle which was now opening—Beatty accepted combat under that temporary handicap in order to force an engagement which it is very likely the Hun would have declined otherwise.

'The enemy's shooting was extremely good, and it was not long before we were straddled; while our battle-cruisers, it seemed to me, were somewhat short with their opening salvos. At this time our squadron, the Second, was deployed in line ahead in advance of the battle-cruisers: the First and Third Light Cruiser Squadrons had, for some reason, been ordered to the northward, and did not figure in this phase of the action. The enemy fire was, of course, largely concentrated on the battle-cruisers, and, because these were but a short distance away, it was much easier for me to observe the effect of the German shells upon them than that of theirs upon the Germans.

'For a while, neither appeared to be doing the other much harm. Then, suddenly, a huge column of black smoke leapt into the air astern of us and went rolling heavenward in a flame-shot mass that looked almost solid, so thick it was. The roar of the explosion which caused it must have been something stupendous, and yet, so ear-splitting was the pandemonium from our own guns and bursting German shells, I have no recollection whatever of hearing it. I could still see the *Lion* with the *Tiger* astern of her, and a little out of line toward the enemy, but the other battle-cruisers were completely obscured by the clouds of dense smoke. It was evident that one of our ships had blown up, and from the position

of the column of smoke, it appeared probable that it was the *Queen Mary*.

'The enemy began to hit the *Lion* especially hard at this juncture—probably as a consequence of the concentration on her of the fire of a ship, or ships, that had been directed to the *Queen Mary*. By altering course slightly to starboard she shook off the attack for a few minutes, the effect on the fall of shot being very noticeable. They found her again as she came back to course, and it was at this moment that an incident—or rather two synchronised incidents—occurred which was responsible for my gaining a somewhat erroneous impression of things at the time. To give you an idea of how difficult it is for a man to see and understand what is going on about him in a great naval battle, I will describe first what I *thought* I saw, and then tell you what really happened.'

The Commander opened a drawer of his desk and took out several pages of closely-written foolscap. 'I wrote these hurried notes,' he said, 'the day following the battle, after it had become evident that the Hun had succeeded in eluding us and we were steaming back to base. It was simply an endeavour to set down a few impressions, while they were still fresh in my mind, of things which I had had an especially good opportunity to see. This is what I wrote about the incident in question :

'Just as she (the *Lion*) came back to course again, she was very heavily hit, and I saw an enormous plate, which I judged to be the top of a turret, blown into the air. It appeared to rise very slowly, turning round and round and looking very like an aeroplane. I should say that it rose four or five hundred feet, and, looking at it through glasses, I could distinctly see the holes in it for bolts. My attention was drawn from this by a sheet of flame by her second funnel, which shot up about sixty feet, and soon died down, but did not completely disappear. It appeared to have no effect upon the ship, except that her 'midships turret seemed to be out of action. One gun was about horizontal and the other one at a considerable elevation. Just then another enormous cloud of smoke shot up down the line, almost exactly similar to the first one. . . .'

'That is precisely the way I recalled seeing what occurred. Now let me tell you what really did happen, as nearly as I have been able to figure it out since. The *Lion* was hard hit, on or near the 'midships turret—just as it looked to me she had been—and the force of the exploding shell (or that of another explosion caused by that shell) *did* blow the top of the turret into the air, and it is

quite likely that I saw it go. This plate, however, did not go very high in the air—perhaps not over fifty or sixty feet—and fell back, I believe, upon the deck. Possibly if I had stopped to ponder the matter, I should have realised that nothing less than an explosion powerful enough to blow up a ship could have the force to blow the top of a turret, weighing tons, as high in the air as I was sure I saw the one in question go: and this, in fact, was what had occurred. The second great column of smoke I had seen was from the explosion which blew up the *Indefatigable*, and this, it seems, must have occurred practically simultaneously with the one which put the *Lion*'s midships turret out of action. Two turret-plates, more or less in line from where I watched, started their skyward flight at almost the same instant. Losing in the smoke the one which I had seen rise from the *Lion*, I must have turned my glasses upon the higher blown one from the *Indefatigable*, and followed the flight of that. The incident only goes to show how difficult it is to "keep one's perspective" in a sea fight, even with the things actually transpiring before one's eyes.

"I think it was while the smoke of the explosion of the *Indefatigable* was still mounting toward the zenith that the signalman in the after-control reported that the *Lion* had ordered our destroyers to attack with torpedoes. Led by the *Champion*, the flotillas got away at full speed, some of them passing through between the ships of our squadron, but the most of them astern of it. They were steering a course about four points in from ours toward the enemy. At about the same time, a string of white Verey lights shot up from the leading enemy ship—at least five or six of them floating in the air at once. This was probably the signal for his destroyers to attack, for almost immediately I saw them begin to stream towards us, passing through and ahead of his line. Somewhere out in the grey smother which separated the opposing lines of cruisers, the destroyers came within range of each other and had a little fight all of their own—a sort of "battle within a battle," so to speak. How things were going there, I never knew; for scarcely had the rival game-cocks disappeared into the smoke of their opening action when "enemy battleships approaching from the southward" were reported, and little things like brushes between destroyer flotillas immediately became of secondary interest. The German so-called High Sea Fleet was at last out, and apparently seeking action.

"It was, as you have doubtless heard, a day of shifting visibility—a circumstance which must have been largely responsible for

our approaching comparatively close to the enemy battleships before sighting them. They presented a striking sight, keeping perfect station and making no smoke whatever. I was a good deal surprised to see that they were led by the *Roon*, and that no other cruiser, and no destroyers, were in sight. They appeared to be steaming comparatively slowly.

‘The *Lion* hoisted what I seem to recall as a general signal of “Sixteen points starboard”; but as it is one of the duties of the light cruiser to learn at first hand how things are developing, the Second L.C.S. held on to reconnoitre at closer quarters. Directing my glasses astern, when the battle-cruisers turned, I was able to note very little damage in the *Lion*, except that the ‘midships turret was evidently still out of action. The guns of the latter were quite black—doubtless from the fire that had swept them. A fire was still burning at the base of her second funnel, and, just below the ‘midships turret, on the port side, was what appeared to be a big square hole. This, as I learned later, was only a freaky sort of a scar from a shell-hit, and did not go all the way through. The only one of the remaining battle-cruisers which I remember noticing was the *Tiger*—finest in appearance of the squadron—but was unable to discover indications of serious damage.

‘It was not long before we were some twelve or thirteen thousand yards from the enemy line; but although (as transpired presently) their guns were able to send shells from two to three times that distance, they did not open fire as long as we continued to head in to them and reduce the range. Just why this was, I cannot say; but probably it was for the same reason that a cat usually lets a venturesome mouse creep just as close as it will come before pouncing on it. I was just wondering what was going to happen, when the *Southampton* turned to starboard, the *Dublin*, *Nottingham*, and *Birmingham* following in succession. As the last in the line, the *Birmingham* came rather nearer to the enemy than any of the others.

‘Doubtless realising that the “mouse” was about to try to slip away, the “cat” chose that moment for its “pounce.” The signal to open fire must have been given by the German Flagship the instant the *Southampton* began turning; for almost immediately a ripple of flame-spurts ran down their line, and a few seconds later what were probably the first salvos that the High Sea Fleet—as a Fleet—ever fired in battle began throwing up the water in and about the course of the Second L.C.S. It was distinctly good shooting; and I don’t mind confessing that I couldn’t see how

we had even a fighting chance of ever getting clear of the veritable hail of heavy shell that descended all about us. One closely bunched salvo straddled us about abreast the after-funnel, two threw up their foam fountains close at hand to port, and three others closer still to starboard. The latter were not over six or seven yards away, and the ship shivered under the jar of them as though she had rammed something solid—even more, it seemed to me, than when we ran down the U-boat early in the War.'

The Commander rummaged for a moment in a drawer, and presently found and handed me a small photograph. All that it showed was a cruiser, with an enormous cloud of inky smoke pouring out of her four funnels, and, beside her, three sky-tossed geysers of smoke-shot foam, apparently two or three times as high as her masts. Each foam-spout looked about the height and volume of the famous 'Old Faithful' geyser in the Yellowstone, and the blended waters of the three gave a photographic effect remarkably like the still more imposing 'Excelsior,' greatest of the Yellowstone geysers.

' You can imagine what it was like trying to navigate among things like that,' he resumed. ' That photo was taken from the *Nottingham*, and the salvo shown was by no means the nearest of the many that conspired to make our "retirement" a veritable "obstacle race." I could constantly hear the "whirr" of flying shell-splinters, and occasionally I was able to follow their flight with my eye. Once what appeared to be half or more of a large shell flew over in an erratic ricochet. It seemed almost leisurely in its flight, but it tore its way through the air with the roar of a railway train, and its impact, where it struck the water a few hundred yards ahead, was something terrific. I also recall seeing a large shell, which had somehow got beam-on to its proper line of flight, spinning on its side as it went wobbling over us. We had no casualties from shell fragments in the *Birmingham*, but the Navigating Officer of the *Dublin* had his neck slightly scratched by one—a grimly prophetic incident in the light of what occurred a few hours later when his head was almost cut off by a Hun projectile.

' The other three ships of the Squadron returned the fire of the enemy for a few minutes at the start, though it is hardly possible to any purpose. Then it settled down into the best kind of a race we could make of it to "stand from under." I need not tell you that we did not give any great amount of attention to keeping stations. Steaming very much in "open order," each ship drove her engines for all that was in them. In the case of the *Birmingham*,

this was a goodly number of revolutions better than they had ever done before, and, I dare say, have ever done since. As the accuracy of the enemy's fire began to fall off as the distance increased, the Flagship made us a signal to close. Several salvos fell uncomfortably close again as we started to steer toward her, and once or twice we had to sheer to port. Eventually, however, the Squadron formed in "Line ahead," but still considerably strung out so as not to offer too favourable a target.

'The enemy continued to fire at us as long as he had anything to range on, and the last salvos fell after his ships had almost melted into the mists of the horizon. I could only tell when a battleship was firing by the reflection of the flashes. I had the time of flight of one of the final salvos taken, and it appeared to be close to forty seconds. This, I reckoned, would have made the range something like 35,000 yards. That they did not score one clean hit on any of the four ships during the considerable interval the Squadron was a target for practically the whole of the High Sea Fleet, does not say too much for their gunnery.

'Our battle-cruisers were out of sight by this time, and it appeared that the enemy battle-cruisers had also turned to the northward. Sharp flashes of guns from both sides, however, told that the battle was still in progress in this direction. A welcome but transient sight at this juncture was the Fifth Battle Squadron—the four "Elizabths," but without the *Q. E.* herself—turning to the northward and steaming hard to join the fray. We held them in sight on our port bow for a while, and then they grew indistinct and merged into the haze. The *Southampton* turned sharply to starboard—evidently with the intention of sighting the enemy Battle Fleet again; but the manoeuvre drew so heavy a shelling that she lost no time in coming back to a more northerly course.

'Shortly afterwards, just to the right of the *Southampton*, I sighted a sudden burst of flame which shot, in a sort of jagged-edged fluttering wave, high into the sky. At the time, I was puzzled to account for it, for it flashed up at a point that I knew to be between the Fifth Battle Squadron and the enemy; but I have since decided it must have come from our armoured cruiser, the *Defence*, blowing up. The next thing I recall seeing, furnished ample evidence that the "Fifth" had arrived at the battle for which I saw them steaming so hard. It was the *Warspite*—apparently undamaged, but flying the "Not under control" signal. A shell, striking her on the starboard quarter, had put her steering-gear

temporarily out of action, and as a consequence she turned out of line and in a wide circle toward the enemy, drawing for a while the concentrated fire of a good deal of the High Sea Fleet. Before the trouble was put right, she had wobbled in erratic course almost if not completely round the *Warrior*, which was also in bad shape from shell-fire. It was this latter incident which started the absurd story, current in England for some weeks after Jutland, that the *Warspite* had gallantly interposed herself between the enemy and the disabled *Warrior* in order to attract the fire to herself and allow that cruiser a chance to take advantage of the diversion and limp out of range. As a matter of fact, the *Warrior* did manage to withdraw, and I saw her, not long after I sighted the *Warspite*, steaming slowly to the north-west, a cloud of steam welling up from her main-mast and after-funnel. The *Engadine*, I subsequently learned, passed her a line later and towed her seventy miles, but ultimately had to cast her off and let her sink. It was about this time that I also sighted one of our destroyers sinking to starboard, with another either standing by or disabled.

'There followed a short interval in which no enemy ship was visible, but the heavy rumble of gun-fire never ceased to shake the air. Then we sighted a large German ship—which might have been the *Lutzow*—burning fiercely, and scored several hits on it as we passed at 7,000 yards. As she was apparently too far gone to need further attention, we steamed on, and presently caught up with a number of our destroyers and a cruiser which proved to be the *Duke of Edinburgh*. Almost immediately a disabled enemy destroyer was sighted on our starboard beam, and just about the whole lot of us opened up on it together. As we passed on, I saw three of our destroyers closing in to finish off the battered hulk.

'Directly after that, sticking vertically out of the water, the bow of a ship appeared. Evidently the sea at this point was too shallow to engulf the great hull completely. From the pinkness of the bottom colour, the lightness of the grey of her hull and upper works, the distance forward that her draught-marks were painted, the shape of her ram, and the fact that the only anchor she appeared to have was carried on the starboard side, I concluded that she was German. I know that there is a general impression that a ship, sighted in such a position as this, was recognised beyond a doubt as the *Invincible*; but, for the reasons I have given, I shall take a good deal of convincing on that point.

'It was about this time, I believe, that what had been a slowly heightening smoke-blur on the northern horizon resolved itself

into the battle-line of the Grand Fleet, steaming hard on a south-easterly course in an endeavour to follow Beatty and his battle-cruisers and bar the return of the Germans to their base. This changed our rôle from pursued to pursuer, and, turning in succession to starboard in the wake of the *Southampton*, the Second L.C.S. again headed in to establish touch with the High Sea Fleet. There was still fight left in the burning cruiser I have just mentioned, and she made a plucky effort to return the fire with which we raked her as we steamed up and past. We passed from that action into a hot admonitory hail of shells from several battleships of the High Sea Fleet, which evidently was not minded to let us come close enough to spy on its movements and snap at its heels. This fire became so heavy, as we drew closer, that we finally had to sheer to the westward into "quieter waters."

'This was about half-past eight; and in a three-quarter hour lull which followed, I had a chance to slip down to the ward-room for a bite of hot food. In the gathering dusk of 9.15, we began engaging what appeared to be some enemy destroyers which made their appearance on our starboard bow; but darkness put an end to the action before I could see the results of our shooting. Then night, unspeakably anxious in its uncertainty of telling friend from foe, closed in and wiped out, as a snuffer extinguishes a candle, the balance of strength which the coming of the Grand Fleet had given us over the enemy. There followed five hours of tense waiting and watching as the ships plunged on through the almost sentient blackness, interspersed with savage intervals of primal chaos.

'It was about a quarter after ten that four or five German light cruisers—possibly accompanied by the heavier *Roon*—came charging along through the darkness and opened fire upon the *Southampton* and *Dublin* (the first and second ships in line) at only a few hundred yards. Searchlights were turned on by both the enemy and one or two of our squadron, but they were either switched off or destroyed within a minute or two. Indeed, there was no need of searchlights, for, between gun-fire and the fires started by it, all the targets were more than sufficiently illuminated. The *Southampton* was heavily hit, and the *Dublin* somewhat less severely, but the shots directed at the *Birmingham* were all short. Three or four fires were flaming on the upper deck of the *Southampton*, lighting her up brilliantly, and I also saw fires burning on two or three of the enemy. The latter were also being fired upon by some British ship on our port quarter, and I could distinctly see

her shells speeding to their mark down the beam of her search-light. Then the action broke off as suddenly as it opened, and we were steaming on into the blackness of the night again. Both the *Southampton* and the *Dublin* had heavy casualties in dead and wounded as a consequence of that swift but terrible exchange ; but I think there is little doubt that we gave as good as we received.

'A little later a number of our destroyers passed on our starboard side, and from their rather aimless "devil-may-care" progress, I rather inferred that they had probably expended all their torpedoes and were simply hanging round on the chance of being useful and seeing what was left of the show.

'It must have been about eleven that a terrific burst of firing broke out on our port side, the flashes of the guns illuminating brilliantly the three-funnelled German battleship that was responsible for it. Almost immediately, a British destroyer some distance off, at which the fire was directed, burst into flames and disappeared. The battleship switched off her lights and ceased firing the instant a bright white light was shot vertically upward from some ship lurking in the darkness to the right, and I thought this may have been a Flagship calling off one of her squadron from a job that appeared sufficiently finished. Firing, both near and distant, rumbled on through the remaining hours of darkness, with sudden gun-flashes flaring redly round the horizon, but we were not again in action with the enemy.

'All through the night we held on our southerly course, and daybreak found us peering out into the grey mists to the westward in the confident hope that the rising sun would reveal the German Battle Fleet on that side, and therefore cut off completely from its base. Vain hope. Only the three "Barhams," ploughing steadily along on our port bow, were visible near at hand, and only long-familiar silhouettes nicked the distant horizon on either side. At the end of a day of fruitless searching for an enemy that had managed to elude us in the darkness, the Second L.C.S. joined up with the battle-cruisers and returned to base to coal and stand-by for the next call. Since then' (the Commander leaned back and smiled the weary but patient smile that one comes to know so well in the Navy) 'since then—well, it has been about two years more of—of more or less the same kind of stunt you saw them going out on this afternoon ; the same kind of stunt we're all on—looking for the Hun.'

*SUGGESTIONS FOR AN IRREGULAR ANTHOLOGY.*

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT in 'A New Study of English Poetry' warns us of the dangers to which we are exposed from anthologists and the growing love of anthologies. 'The anthology,' he observes, 'was in its origin a collection of minor poems, a collection of memorable pieces from the works of minor poets—that is of poets who are not themselves so memorable.' Here we may interject, with all deference, that this definition hardly covers the Greek Anthology, which includes many poems which are only 'minor' when tested by their length, and were written by poets emphatically memorable, e.g. Sappho, Callimachus, Simonides, Theocritus, to mention no others. Sir Henry Newbolt regrets that this definition is no longer followed. 'A modern anthology is simply a collection,' and his warning is specially directed against anthologies which profess to give you a collection of all the best poetry, excluding only those poems which are too long for inclusion in a small volume. The anthology which sets out to be a collection of gems is chosen on a bad principle, because the reader is 'led to understand that he has before him in this small compass all the poetry which is really worth troubling about; all that is likely to give him pleasure. He learns, therefore, either to disregard the personality of the poets altogether, to treat them all as if they were very much upon an equality when they were at their best, or at least to believe that in these select pieces he has sufficient material for judging of even the greatest poets. The Temple of Fame has been by this means rebuilt upon a conveniently small scale, the niches in it being reserved, not for poets, but for single poems.' Sir Henry Newbolt, having thus ruled out what he considers to be the bad anthology, and dismissing the anthology which is a mere work of reference on a special subject as indifferent, reiterates his conviction that the only good anthology is that which professes to give the best poems of the minor poets, 'that is to say the best poems of those poets who have produced from time to time good work, but have not embodied in it the whole of their personality, or have embodied in it only a personality of a simple nature and no great variety

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of experience or mood.' To these he would add 'all those anonymous poems which cannot be attributed to any author known to us, including the contents of the Elizabethan Song-books and other collections and our national ballads. But this is not the kind of anthology now popular. The anthology in general request is a labour-saving appliance, and the labour which it saves the reader is the trouble of making a real acquaintance with those poets who are best worth attention.'

It is to be feared that the anthology for which suggestions are put forward in this paper would hardly meet with the approval of so austere a critic; yet in some ways it comes within the four corners of his definition. It would unquestionably contain poems by minor poets, and anonymous pieces, none of which would embody the whole of the personality of their writers. But its special *differentia* would reside not in the beauty, but the point of the anonymous pieces and the badness, absurdity, or eccentricity of those where the authorship could be traced. It must not be forgotten that profundity in the art of sinking sometimes approaches genius. And genius itself occasionally stoops from Olympus. The lapses of considerable authors are a consolation to mediocrity. Our collection would thus possess a high educational value, by enshrining meritorious anonymous poems not included in other anthologies, by warning the aspirant what to avoid, and refreshing the critical by the contemplation of the splendours of insanity. So far as poetry is concerned, the anthology might not be unfairly described as a Tin Treasury. But it might be profitably enlarged to include prose specimens as well, if indeed it is possible nowadays to frame a definition of prose which will exclude all the forms of *vers libre*.

In the verse section of the proposed Tin Treasury a foremost place should be reserved for those pieces, mostly anonymous, and hitherto discarded by professional anthologists, which, without laying claim to the possession of any high poetic quality or melodic beauty, are yet at once workmanlike in their execution, terse in expression, and sane in their outlook. Tested by the standard of Shakespeare and Milton they may be no more than doggerel, but they are sometimes inspired doggerel, if such an apparent contradiction in terms may be allowed.

No better example of this kind of verse can be found than the often quoted but seldom printed epitaph on the 'old woman who always was tired':

## 'DOLCE FAR NIENTE.'

'Here lies an old woman who always was tired ;  
 She lived in a world where too much was required.  
 Her last words on earth were, " My friends, I am going  
 Where there neither is cooking, nor washing, nor sewing.  
 With loud Hallelujahs the Heavens are ringing,  
 But I shall have nothing to do with the singing.  
 So weep not for me, and mourn for me never,  
 For I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever."'

Catalani is said to have remarked of Sontag that she was not great, but that she was great *dans son genre*, and the criticism may be applied to these admirable lines. Except for the purple patch in the fifth line the style is homely and pedestrian. But as a *cri de cœur* they are irresistible. Apart from the slight repetition in the last line but one, there is not a single word that could be spared. If this be doggerel, it is doggerel *in excelsis*.

Another example of this kind of verse, also admirable, though hardly attaining to the same level of poignancy, is the jingling octet which neatly sums up the merits of the eternal duel between conscious virtue and conscious talent :

'If all the good people were clever,  
 And all that are clever were good,  
 The world would be better than ever  
 We thought that it possibly could.  
 But, alas ! it is seldom or never  
 These two hit it off as they should ;  
 For the good are so harsh to the clever,  
 The clever so rude to the good.'

A plea may also be put in for those epigrams which, if lacking in the passion or elegance of classical examples, have yet a rude and elemental vigour of their own. A good specimen of this type is the quatrain in which an anonymous but human schoolgirl satirically contrasted the weakness of her kind with the immunity from the tender passion enjoyed by two famous headmistresses :

'Miss Buss and Miss Beale  
 Cupid's darts never feel.  
 How different from us,  
 Miss Beale and Miss Buss !'

On a lower level again, but yet worthy at any rate of consideration as possible candidates for admission to our suggested collection, are those pieces of doggerel or homely rhyme which survive, in oral currency for the most part, by virtue of a certain efficiency of expression. They are not memorable, except in the limited and literal sense of being easily remembered because they are cast in a metrical form. As a specimen the following lines may be given, familiar to the present writer for at least forty years, but never seen by him in print.

'THE ROUND OF THE CLOCK.'

'The industrious "pore,"  
Must get up at four.  
Those who wish to thrive  
Must get up at five.  
Those who have to lay bricks  
Ought to get up at six.  
Those who have thriven  
May rest until seven.  
The rich and the great  
May lie until eight.  
The pampered and fine  
May snooze until nine.  
Only great men  
May sleep until ten.  
The famed Sleepers Seven  
Slept on till eleven.  
Those in night-shifts who delve  
May repose until twelve.  
A millionaire's son  
Often rises at one.  
Leader-writers (a few)  
Must sleep until two.  
And a Spanish grandee  
May get up at three.'

This is a far cry from Daniel's noble sonnet :

'Care-charmer sleep, son of the sable Night,  
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born'—

culminating in the splendid couplet :

'Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,  
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.'

But we are considering a Tin not a Golden Treasury. It is only right to add that the lines on early and late rising quoted above do not profess to be a correct version of the *editio princeps*, and that a few unauthorised couplets have been introduced to make good the lapses of memory.

The admission of 'Limericks' to our irregular Anthology cannot be overlooked, but it is not an easy question to decide. Like the little girl in the rhyme, when they are good they are (sometimes) 'very, very good'; but 'when they are bad they are horrid.' Having recently discussed this form at some length in the pages of the CORNHILL, we may be excused from entering into details. The 'Limerick' palls with repetition, and to read the 'Book of Limericks' recently published, which contains more than seven hundred specimens, from cover to cover without a stop, conduces to acute mental dyspepsia. Ineptitude can be exquisite, but most modern 'Limericks' are distinguished by forced facetiousness, or a 'tripe and oniony' flavour of the most pronounced kind. For example:

‘There was an old woman of Clewer  
Who rode on a bike, and it threw her.  
A butcher came by  
And said, “Madam, don’t cry,”  
As he fastened her on with a skewer.’

Lear’s nonsense rhymes stand apart, but they do not lend themselves to selection. For the rest there are not more than twenty really first-rate 'Limericks,' but a dozen would be quite enough for our Anthology.

Room should be found in our Anthology for a section devoted to absurdities, the *ἄτοπα* of Aristotle's categories of things, including the 'drunken helots' of literature, which might serve a useful purpose in teaching authors commencing what to avoid, besides affording entertainment to the critical. Aristotle, it may be remembered, though rather rigid in his view of the subject matter of literature, did not entirely condemn the Impossible or even the Absurd, so long as it was plausible. He does not, however, contemplate the possibility of an ineptitude so abysmal as to attain to a sort of inverted sublimity. In a representative 'Lyra Ineptiarum' space should be found for lines, couplets, stanzas, and even whole poems. There are many classical examples of bad single lines in the works of poets of repute. In modern

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poetry a claim for supremacy might be advanced for one which occurred in a little volume published somewhere about sixty years ago. The writer was describing a water picnic, at which one of the party, 'Eric, the boy poet,' delighted his companions by singing,

'In exquisite falsetto now and then.'

There is an ample choice of excruciating couplets. They abound in modern hymns, and the earlier hymnologists did not always escape lapses into the well of bathos undefiled. For example, in one of the early paraphrases of the Psalms you will find these lines :

'Imagination's widest stretch  
In wonder dies away.'

Epitaphs are rich in unconscious absurdity, and Swinburne in a letter to Watts-Dunton quotes a superb instance in the couplet on the accidental death of a volunteer :

'He fell : Fate sounded, Simpson is no more :  
And grateful Maidstone bled at every pore.'

The force of fatuity could no further go. But for heroic illustration of the art of sinking, the palm must be awarded to two lines from an unsuccessful Oxford Prize Poem on the 'Voyage of the *Mayflower*' :

'At last, by favour of Almighty God,  
With bellying sail the Fathers made Cape Cod.'

Students of minor poetry will find no lack of suitable material in the shape of stanzas. The best (or worst) that occurs to us is one from a lyric written and set to music by the late Hamilton Aidé :

'Nature cares not whence or how,  
Nature asks not why,  
'Tis enough that thou art thou,  
And that I am I.'

These lines are 'simple, sensuous and passionate' and quite impossible to forget. Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox may have equalled but has certainly never surpassed their compact inanity, though she deserves at least an honourable mention for the quatrain in her appeal 'To Men' :

' We suffer so ; but women's souls,  
 Like violet powder dropped on coals,  
 Give forth their best in anguish. Oh,  
 The subtle secrets that we know.'

and again for the aphorisms in 'Sorrow's Uses' :

' Sweeter the crust tastes after the fast  
 Than the sated gourmand's finest repast.  
 The faintest cheer sounds never amiss  
 To the actor who once has heard a hiss.'

As one of her admirer's observes, 'There may have been poets who have essayed to sing in a more sublime strain. But the very fact that Mrs. Wilcox points us to the infinitude of the commonplace proves how completely she has identified herself with what must be the mission of all art, and especially poetry, in the future.'<sup>1</sup>

In a wholly different category, yet worthy of inclusion as showing the 'thin partitions' that divide 'great wits from madness,' is the perversion of Longfellow's 'Village Blacksmith' written by a patient in a lunatic asylum :

' His hair is red and white and blue,  
 His face is like the tan ;  
 His brow is wet with blood and sweat,  
 He steals where'er he can ;  
 He looks the whole world in the face,  
 A drunkard and a man.'

It is perhaps worthy of record that the late Mr. Stephen Phillips thought these lines much better than the original. In this context one should not forget that sane and even eminent writers sometimes unconsciously deviate into absurdity. Thus one of the most distinguished of modern historians in a volume of meditative verse, marked by a good deal of quiet charm, apostrophised his fluttering heart as 'little bounder.' One could not have a better example of the process by which 'words and phrases perfectly sound in themselves have become degraded or vulgarised.' As Mr. Crosland (from whom we quote this comment but not the illustration given above) reminds us, Shakespeare ends one of his sonnets with the line,

'Till my bad angel fire my good one out,'

<sup>1</sup> R. Dimsdale Stocker in an 'Introductory Word' to *Poems of Love*, by Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

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and he continues,

'Since Shakespeare's day to "fire out" has acquired a vulgar, comic or burlesque meaning. So that in sonnets angels good or bad can no longer "fire out." Another instance is the adjective "glad"—a fine poetic word, which, however, can be no longer prefixed to "eye" or "hand" because "glad eye" and "glad hand" are now vulgar expressions.'

The ignorance of the wise becomes the bliss of the ribald.

English poets and poetasters have no monopoly of bathos, dulness, or inanity. We know what Juvenal thought of Cicero's verse, and how Homer's supremacy did not exempt him from the charge of occasionally nodding. But such lapses would hardly be suitable for our anthology. A plea, however, might be put in for the worst or most wonderful hexameters perpetrated by English schoolboys. The worst that ever came within the ken of the present writer is the rendering of 'Three days and three nights was I tossed on the deep,' into

'Tres dies noctesque ego jactabar per pontum.'

And then there is the pleasing Eton 'chestnut' of the boy, who, in accordance with the old practice of teaching Latin verse, was given the words, 'A man struck him with a big stick'—this was long before Mr. Roosevelt was thought of—to turn into a Latin hexameter line. Looking up 'man' in the *Gradus*, he was so impressed with the synonym 'pulvis et umbra sumus' that he decided to use it. Here, at least, was half a line ready-made. But the method was expensive and called for rigid economy in the choice of the remaining words. Even so he found himself, by the addition of 'magno percussit eum,' with only one syllable left for 'stick.' *Baculum*, *bacillum*, *fustis* were all unavailable. At last, thanks to a brilliant inspiration, he thought of 'candle-stick.' Obviously if *candelabrum* were dissected, *brum* stood for stick. Hence the triumphant completion of the line:

'Pulvis et umbra sumas magno percussit eum bro.'

These efforts lead us on to the larger question of 'howlers.' Here again the field is large, and it is not unreaped. (By the way, if one may be pardoned the digression, is it not strange to find Choerilus, the contemporary of Herodotus, complaining\* that all poetical subjects had been already exhausted, all the domain of letters mapped out, and all the arts cultivated to their extreme

limits, so that ‘we are now left behind in the race and wherever one looks there is no room anywhere for a freshly-yoked chariot to make its way to the front’?) The irregular anthologist will need all his discrimination to make a selection at once representative and distinguished, when so many flowers are artificially manufactured. Yet here as elsewhere truth is sometimes quite as strange as fiction; witness the authentic brief life of Richard I.: ‘He led an expedition into Normandy and was shot through the eye by a Mormon.’ Where the faked ‘howler’ fails is in the piling up of the agony; the genuine article is nearly always confined to a single absurdity. And just as ‘Bulls’ have been at once truly and inaccurately described as pregnant, so ‘howlers’ are sometimes highly if unconsciously instructive, as when it was said that the feminine of *senex* was *Seneca*.

The boy who gave the genitive and meaning of *grus* as ‘*gruntis*, a pig,’ deserved a good mark. To revert to Bulls, the best comment on the Irish variety is to be found in Sir Jonah Barrington’s ‘Recollections.’ He observes of Sir Boyle Roche that

‘he seldom launched a blunder from which some fine aphorism or maxim might not be extracted. . . . He blundered certainly more than any public speaker in Ireland, but his bulls were rather logical perversions, and had some strong point in most of them. The English people consider the bull as nothing more than a vulgar nonsensical expression; but Irish blunders are frequently humorous hyperboles or *oxymorons*, and present very often the most energetic mode of expressing the speaker’s meaning. . . . Never was there a more sensible blunder than the following. We recommend it as a motto to gentlemen in the army: “The best way,” said Sir Boyle, “to avoid danger is to meet it plump.”’

There are plenty of English bulls, but they are mostly of the nature of mixed metaphors, and they turn up in the most unexpected quarters. For instance, Mark Pattison, of all people in the world, has this extraordinary sentence in his ‘Memoirs’ (p. 16):

‘At this day all information is more widely diffused, or accessible; but even at this day a country squire or rector, on landing with his cub under his wing in Oxford, finds himself much at sea as to the respective advantages or demerits of the various Colleges.’

The picture called up is indeed that of a fearful amphibious fowl, but the context precludes us from supposing that it was intentional, and it does not move one to laughter like the paragraph which once appeared in an Irish newspaper describing the sequel

to a burglary : 'After a fruitless search all the money was recovered except one pair of boots.' Journalistic ineptitudes are perhaps hardly as common as in the roaring days of the 'young lions of Peterborough Court,' but treasures are still at hand to reward the industrious collector. Not so very long ago lightning was compared by a flamboyant scribe to 'God's shorthand,' and a good deal of valuable instruction in the art of how not to say things can be gathered from a study of the vagaries of the ex-halfpenny press. Misprints are less educative, but they are often a source of joy, and possibly a few might be admitted to our irregular anthology. Few are more pleasing than those enshrined in the ancient yarn—probably concocted—of the public banquet at which a speaker, in proposing the toast of the Army, coupled with it the name of a distinguished general, whom he described, according to the printed account of the proceedings, as a 'bottle-scarred veteran.' In the next issue of the paper in which this libel had appeared, a note was inserted, expressing regret for a typographical error, and explaining that the words should have been 'battle-scarred veteran.' But the most extraordinary misprint which ever appeared in a paper of importance was that by which, owing to the misreading of a cablegram, a Colonial Governor was credited with a double addition to his family. As a matter of fact the Proconsul had been taking a leading part in the ceremony organised to celebrate the initial stage of the construction of a new railway, and the brief summary cabled to London ended with the words 'Governor turns first sod,' which in transmission were perverted into 'Governor twins first son,' and expanded as above. It only remains to be added that the Governor was a widower. Only an extraordinarily strong sense of humour could have saved the Governor from irritation at being thus victimised. We hope he possessed it—like the soldier who was sentenced to be flogged and while the punishment was being inflicted laughed loudly and continuously. When he was asked for the cause of his merriment he replied : 'I can't help laughing. You see, the fact is you're flogging the wrong man.'

Other forms of literary expression, notably letters and testimonials, seem to lend themselves to the scheme. Treasures are sometimes found in booksellers' catalogues. For example, in a list of second-hand books issued by a London dealer some years ago one entry ran as follows :

'MESSIAH.—An Oratorio performed at the Theatre in York, by Major Canamus, sm. 4to, sewed, 5s.'

Early libretti of the 'Messiah,' it may be mentioned, have the quotation 'majora canamus' on the title-page.

But these are only a few suggestions, which might be indefinitely extended on the general lines indicated, for the compilation of a small volume treating for the most part those authors, whom Pope professed to regard as the common enemies of mankind, as unconscious benefactors of humanity.

C. L. G.

P.S.—Since this paper was written, the epitaph on the 'Tired Woman' has been the subject of an interesting if inconclusive discussion in the correspondence columns of the *Spectator*. Dr. Wallis Budge, writing from the British Museum, gives a simpler, less rhythmical, and cruder version than that which I have quoted :

'FROM THE TOMBSTONE OF A MAID-OF-ALL-WORK.'

'Here lies a poor woman who always was tired,  
Who lived in a house where no help was hired.  
Her last words on earth were : " Dear friends, I am going  
Where there won't be no scrubbing, nor sweeping, nor sewing,  
But everything there is exact to my wishes.  
For where there's no eating there's no washing of dishes.  
I'll be where loud anthems is always a-ringing,  
But as I've no voice I'm clear of the singing.  
Don't mourn for me now, don't mourn for me never,  
For I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever."

Dr. Wallis Budge is an expert in *origines*, and the concurrent testimony of many other correspondents seems to point to his version being the *editio princeps*. But he has failed to trace the authorship. The epitaph was quoted from a Sheffield paper by James Payn in his novel 'Thicker than Water,' and one of the *Spectator's* correspondents states that it was copied by a Sheffield washer-woman who hanged herself on a clothes-line on July 31, 1905, and was read to the jury at the inquest. Another correspondent 'thinks' the epitaph is to be found in Bushey churchyard; a third says it comes from a churchyard in Worcestershire. It is given as a Norfolk epitaph in the 'Life of Lord Avebury' (vol. i. p. 224), where we learn that, at a meeting of London shopkeepers, Sir John Lubbock, as he then was, carried an amendment in favour of his Shop Hours Regulation Bill by this quotation,

*A HERO—‘RISING EIGHT.’*

BY HORACE HUTCHINSON.

MR. PUNT stood at the door of his live-stock emporium, in the Royal Road, surveying mankind with a philosophic eye and enjoying the sun of an early autumnal morning.

‘It’s come, sir,’ he said, as I paused on my way to the Underground to give him greeting.

‘What’s come?’ I asked.

‘Marching orders, sir,’ he said.

‘No! Really?’

‘Yes. Come at last they ’as; and this ’ere the third year o’ the war and me applying and applying same as that unfortunate widow what Mr. Jones, ‘im as is curate up at St. Michael’s, was a-telling us about no longer ago than last Sunday. I says to Mrs. Punt, I does, when I comes home, “Seems to me,” I says, “as I’m like that ’ere unfortunate widow,” I says; and she says, “Well, Mr. P., and you see what come to ’er,” she says. “She ’ad what she asked for in the end, she did, and maybe as ’twill ’appen same way with you,” she says, “much though I ’opes as ’ow it never will,” she says. And maybe,’ Mr. Punt added, as if by way of apology for what I might perhaps be apt to deem a lack of proper patriotism on the part of his better half, ‘maybe as ’twas no more than natural, seeing as the twins, bless ’em, ain’t no more than two months old, and she being a nervous woman at ’er best. So I says, by way of comfort like, “Don’t you take on about it, Martha,” I says, “for that ’ere unfortunate widow,” I says, “it was to the Kingdom of ’Eaven as she was applying and applying, and it’s the War Office, Whitehall, as I applies to, and I expects as there’s a deal o’ difference between them ’ere two institutions.”’

I quite agreed with Mr. Punt that there were probably points of essential difference.

‘But she were right, Martha were, arter all. It’s a long lane what ’as no turning, as the oyster said when ’e went down the giraffe’s throat; and I’ve come to the turning-p’nt at last—got to report myself for ’Ome Service, whatever that means. And, whatever it do mean, there’s one thing sure as it don’t mean, and that ’ere’s service in this ’ere live-stock emporium in the Royal Road, Chelsea.’

'And what's going to happen to the live stock when you've gone?' I asked.

'That 'ere's the very question as I've been putting to myself many's the time, sir,' Mr. Punt answered. 'Putting it to myself, I 'as, and putting it to Mrs. Punt, and putting it to my darter Maria, as is out munitioning, and putting it to 'Erbert, I 'as, as is rising eight—and no answer coming from neither one of 'em; for there's Mrs. Punt, she 'ave 'er 'ealth to mind (and 'eavy on 'er mind she do let it lie, more than she did ought), and she 'ave the twins, bless 'em, to mind; and Maria, she's earning that money 'as you wouldn't 'ardly believe it if I was to sum it up for you, and doing work besides, as Mr. Lloyd George tells us as the country is needing cruel bad. I don't 'ardly like to think of 'er giving up 'er job. And 'Erbert—why there—'Erbert, 'e's rising eight and it's 'is holidays from school, but 'e ain't exactly all as I'd like to see a boy to be as is rising eight and is being brought up to manage a live-stock emporium, same as it should be managed—special in wartime, when 'is father's called out to do 'is bit.'

I said that surely he was rather young for so immense a burden to be laid upon him.

'It ain't the taking of the money, or the like, as I expects of 'im,' Mr. Punt hastened to explain. 'Could manage that, what between Mrs. P. and Maria in 'er hours off work and the gal as is in the shop. 'Tain't no more than the feeding of the animals and the birds as I asks of 'im to undertake. You wouldn't 'ardly believe it, if you wasn't to see it, 'ow timid that boy do be with a bird.'

Mr. Punt went to the back door of his shop and called down a passage which communicated with the living-rooms of the family at its rear: "'Erbert, 'Erbert!'

In a few moments there came through the doorway a sturdy little boy, built on Mr. Punt's own short and round-about pattern, bearing in his arms a large ginger cat. The cat was the household familiar, and had no connection whatever with the shifting stock-in-trade in the front shop.

'Ere, 'Erbert,' said Mr. Punt, assuming an air of great fussiness and occupation. 'Put down old Ginger, and give the magpie 'is meal-balls. 'Asn't 'ad 'em this morning 'e 'aven't, and I'm busy talking to this gentleman.

'Just watch 'im, sir. Keep your eye on 'im, while you and me's pretending to be talking; just see 'ow 'e do give 'im them 'ere meal-balls. So good as a play it is to see 'ow 'e do it.'

It was a kind of play, no doubt—the performance had dramatic elements; but whether it was to be regarded as comedy or tragedy, depended rather on the point of view. To Mr. Punt, taking in every detail of the spectacle, even while he was playing at being absorbed in an all-engrossing conversation about nothing at all with me, it seemed to be comedy—if one might judge from the *sotto voce* chuckles of appreciation which emanated from him at the various acts. To me it appeared as if a large element of pathos entered into the comedy: for the simple reason that to one of the chief actors—Herbert, rising eight—the drama had all the terror of pure tragedy. As he advanced towards the cage, meal-box in hand, the other actor, the magpie, which had been perching, hitherto, in a lugubrious, hunched ball, was inspired by the sight of its well-known dinner receptacle to begin a war-dance of a menacing character up and down the length of its single perch. And while its excitement and activity grew, the timidity of the unfortunate small boy approaching it appeared to increase in like proportion. Very hesitatingly he took a meal-ball out of the box. Now advancing his hand and now withdrawing it, accordingly as the pied fury within the cage danced nearer or receded farther from him, he at length succeeded in putting one of the nasty-looking balls through the bars while the bird was momentarily at the side farthest from him. Instantly the magpie fell on the delicacy and devoured it at a gulp; then jumped to the perch again and resumed its frenzied fox-trot. A second ball Herbert succeeded in introducing safely, with the same painful precautions. But his third offer was not quite so accurately timed. Either he made a miscalculation, or the bird, taught by previous experience, was more alert and ready. As two little fingers, with the ball held tremblingly between them, were advanced towards the bars, and just before they could thrust the tasty morsel through, the bird leapt down with the agility of a demon and delivered a most ferocious stab of its bayonet beak at the small grimy fingers and the treasure that they held. Fortunately for those fingers the aim was not quite exact; the beak rang on the bar that caught its stroke with a resonance which echoed through the shop and gave fearful assurance of the piercing that it would have inflicted had its direction been better by a fraction of an inch.

The little boy started back from the cage in an agony.

I recognised a new note in Mr. Punt’s chuckle this time, and a new look of gravity in his face, as he shook his head sadly.

‘Nearly ’ad you that time, ’Erbert,’ he called out to his son. ‘A close shave, as the oyster said when they took off ’is beard. But that ain’t the way, ’Erbert ; that ain’t the way to give it to ’im at all. Look ’ere, now.’ He stepped across to the magpie’s cage, took the box of meal-balls from the still tremulous hands of his son, who was very ready to part with it. ‘Look ’ere, now, you see me do it. “Maggot, maggot, mag!”’ he began calling, in a cheery voice, to the bird. ‘“Ere, then—’ere’s a bit o’ something like for you—’ere’s the stuff for lining for under-waistcoats—try a bit o’ this. No, no, you don’t, now,”’ he added, as the bird made the offer of a dab at the delicacy, ‘“you don’t take it, now, afore I tells yer. D’yer ’ear? There, then—that’s better—that’s a good bird—take it like a gentleman—gently does it.”’

‘There, now, ’Erbert,’ he said, turning to his son again. ‘That’s the way as you should do it, and don’t let me ’ave no more nonsense with you about it, ’cause I tell yer fair and straight as I ain’t going to ’ave none of it—letting a bird like that ’ere magpie come over yer the way yer does. I’m ashamed of yer ; that’s what I am, fair ashamed of yer. In war time, too ; and afore this ’ere gentleman, too !’

The wretched little criminal’s face grew furrowed with misery under this address. With the knuckles of a clenched fist, he bored into his tearful eyes as if he would gouge them out of their sockets, and retreated—a very picture of woe—through the door by which he had come in.

Mr. Punt had revealed himself to me in a new light. I could never have expected so much severity from the imperturbable good humour usually exhibited on his chubby face. I had it in mind that it was my duty to venture upon some remonstrance with him on the harshness with which he had spoken to his little son ; but as I was vainly seeking the right words in which to phrase my disapproval, a glance at his own chubby countenance disarmed me and left me helpless. It was expressive of more poignant grief than one would suppose it possible could be depicted on features so round and moon-like, and I can almost swear that a tear glittered in the corner of each eye. To complete my disarmament, he said in most mournful tones :

‘Oh, ’ow I do ’ate it, sir! ’Ow I ’ates being obligated to do it. ’Ates it far wuss than ever ’Erbert can ’ate it, poor little cove. But obligated is the only word, sir ; there ain’t no other for it. Never do to let a boy as is being eddicated for the live-stock

line, to grow up in the idea as it'll do to let the animals think as they can make 'im afraid of 'em. Fair giving the 'ole show away—that'd be. It's in kindness to 'Erbert and for 'is own good as I 'as to speak 'arsh to 'im time and again when 'e shows as 'e's afraid of 'em. Must bluff 'em as yer ain't afraid—whether it's lions and tigers, or only dogs and parrots and magpies and the like, and the more as you're afraid of 'em, the more yer 'as to bluff 'em as yer ain't. So I'm obligated to put it to 'Erbert, fair and straight. Weren't it the wisest man in the 'ole world, sir, as said "Spare the rod and spile the child" ?

'I believe it was one of Solomon's proverbs,' I agreed.

'And no doubt as 'e was right,' Mr. Punt said thoughtfully. 'Not as the Bible do seem to show as 'e worked it out quite so well in practice as what it sounds, if so be, that is, we was to judge 'im by 'is own son Rehoboam, do it, sir?'

I left Mr. Punt, feeling humbly grateful that my intention of remonstrating with him about his methods for Herbert's education had been frustrated. My reading and general information might be somewhat wider than his, but he certainly had a vast advantage over me in the unbiassed and penetrating wisdom which he brought to bear on what he read and heard, and on all the problems which he met in his walk through life. I felt more like coming to him as pupil than as teacher.

A few days later, I met in the Underground the young divine always spoken of in the Punt family, and all up and down the Royal Road, as 'Mr. Jones,'im as is curate up at St. Michael's.'

'These people—the Punts,' he said, 'of the live-stock shop—they're friends of yours, are they not?'

'The best of friends,' I assured him.

'You know, then, that Mr. Punt has gone?'

'I knew, at least, that it was imminent.'

'And the little boy—Herbert—left in charge.' He said it with a humorous uplifting of the eyebrows.

'He's afraid of the magpie.'

'So should I be,' he said. 'Wouldn't you?'

With the sound, echoing in my mental ear, of the bird's steely beak descending like a pickaxe on the cage bars, I agreed right cordially.

'I should be in an infernal funk, myself,' he said—whereat, with a scathing glance at his clerical hat and collar, an obviously maiden lady of some age drew her skirts carefully away from him.

I think that his occasional use of a strong expression, taken from their own vernacular, was in some small part what endeared him to the poor folk among and for whom he was slaving his health away.

‘He’s a good little boy, Herbert,’ he said with a humorous twinkle at the gathering up of the skirts. ‘He came to tell me all about his trouble with the magpie the same evening that his father went away. He’d made up a little prayer for himself to say about it; and his mother, a well-meaning, rabbit-brained soul of a woman, told him that he was very wicked to trouble God about a magpie. Herbert naturally cried at that, because the magpie meant more to him than anything else for the moment, and he could not understand why God should not take an interest in it too. So then his mother told him he was to come and ask me about it—for some inexplicable reason they seem to put some value on what I tell them. He came and told me his prayer: “Please God, make me not to be afraid of the magpie, and make me a brave boy now as father’s gone to the Front. Amen.” I told him I thought it was a very good prayer, and that I was sure God would not mind how often he prayed it. So I think I sent him off with some comfort in his vexed little soul.’

‘It isn’t exactly to the Front that his father’s gone really, is it?’

‘No; but I didn’t bother him about that,’ said Mr. Jones with a smile, as he got out of the train. ‘I thought they’d put that right for him up above—at the receiver’s end of the telephone. Good morning! ’

That night, we had the very worst air-raid of the very worst series of those disagreeable incidents. People’s nerves had been much tried and were at high tension—the more so that the ordinary day’s work was made far heavier than usual owing to the shortness of the staff with which many businesses were ‘carrying on.’ My personal share of the day’s work at my office had been hard and long, and I had just escaped with gratitude from the lift of the Tube station nearest to my home when the familiar banging and booming outside the station, and a surge of terror-stricken folk thronging inward for the shelter of the Tube’s depths, intimated very distinctly that the flying fiends were with us again.

I was successfully extricating myself from the throng when a ‘special’ touched me on the shoulder.

‘Beg pardon,’ he said, ‘but we’d be so much obliged if you could—one or two of your sort—help us in trying to keep some kind of sense in these poor people. They’re nearly off their heads.’

At that moment I heard a shrill voice, which rose high above the din and sounded more or less familiar: ‘’Erbert, ’Erbert, you foller close! D’you ‘ear me?—you foller close!’

It was Mrs. Punt. The raid was only in its incipient stages, but her stage of hysterics seemed already a tolerably advanced one, as, with a twin on each arm, she pressed towards the lift. ’Erbert, according to command, following close, was laden, as I observed, with all the luggage of the twins—shawls, a bottle, odds and ends indescribable.

My present destiny seemed written on clear lines—to do what I could for the family party now passing. I greeted ’Erbert as an old and valued friend, and went down with them in the lift which I had just quitted.

A special providence bore us to a backwater of the people where was a bench on which a less-burdened woman vacated a seat for the mother of the twins. ’Erbert was relieved of some of his paraphernalia, and Mrs. Punt’s sobbings quieted as she attended to the babies. I let my attention wander momentarily from them. Immediately it was recalled by a shrill anguished cry: ‘’Erbert! Where’s ’Erbert? ’Erbert! ’Erbert! ’ It pierced through the multitudinous sounds of the crowd. But no ’Erbert answered.

‘’Erbert, ’Erbert, where are you? ’Erbert—and ‘im only seven—risin’ eight. ’Erbert, ’Erbert! ’

Again my destiny shone clear—to go in search of ’Erbert. ‘I’ll find him, Mrs. Punt,’ I said valiantly, simulating a confidence I was far from feeling, and went, followed by the shrilling ‘’Erbert, ’Erbert—and ‘im only seven, risin’ eight.’

No ’Erbert was visible—indeed, the throng on the platform would easily hide him. But again a special providence suggested to me that I should inquire of him at the lift. Yes, the girl said, a boy had gone up. She believed it was the same. On her next ascent I went with her.

The raid, or at least the booming of the great guns, was at its worst and noisiest now. There was no ’Erbert in the exit-passage nor in the booking-place, nor was there much temptation to go outside their cover. I looked this way and that, up and down the street—not a sign of a living thing! Presently, through

the blackness and the awful din, I did espy, far off, a small—a very small—figure, coming. Anxiously, I looked while ‘Whizz! Bang! Boom!’ went the great and little guns, each giving the heart its own individual thrill. I scarcely could believe anything so good to be true; but as the minute figure advanced through the dark and the turmoil, and grew a little—still, only a little—larger, I saw with joyful relief that it really was ‘Erbert—’Erbert staggering under the weight of yet another long-clothed figure of size almost equal to his own.

‘What, Herbert,’ I said to him in a moment’s pause between the booms, ‘have you been home for it?’

He nodded his bullety head.

‘But, Herbert,’ I said, ‘is it—was it—triplets?’

‘Ush, sir!’ he replied in a solemn whisper, as he disengaged a hand from beneath the bundle. He pulled me closer down towards him. ‘It’s not a baby really, sir. It’s our old ginger cat. I ’ad to dress her like a baby else them “specials” they wouldn’t ’ave let ’er go down the lift.’

‘But, Herbert,’ I expostulated, as I hurried him and his load under cover, ‘you shouldn’t have gone back, through all that firing, for the cat.’

‘I ’ad to, sir,’ he answered simply. ‘When father went to the Front,’e told me as I was to look arter mother, ’cos she ’as the ’strikes, and the twins and the old Ginger. Maria, she’s out munitioning. I ’ad to dress the twins myself before we came out, ’cos mother was in the ’strikes.’

We were in the lift by this time. I could not find my voice, by reason of some silly kind of choke in it, to reply to his last words. He looked up, surprised at my silence, and as he did so the covering slipped from the cat’s face. Herbert carefully replaced it, and I saw that it was an ‘antimacassar’ chair-back, which he had pressed into service for a veil.

‘Father said as I was to take care of the old cat,’ he observed as he re-veiled the animal. ‘Besides, the kittens is bespoke.’

‘Now, Herbert,’ I said with severity, ‘you’re not to go back again for the kittens—do you understand?’

‘No, sir, I won’t,’ he said. Then added, as if by an after-thought, ‘They ain’t come yet!’

As we worked our way down the platform, I heard again the shrill keen ‘’Erbert, ’Erbert! ’E’s lost—and ’im only seven—risin’ eight.’

'That's mother,' Herbert informed me, in case I might be in doubt.

In a moment more I had delivered him back into her care, and at once she performed a very fine feat of motherhood in holding the two twins securely under one arm while she cuffed 'Erbert soundly with the other.

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I overslept the next morning, as one was apt to after an air-raid night. While I hurried—a guilty and unpunctual thing—along the Royal Road to my train, I met Mr. Jones.

'Get on all right in the raid?' I called out as we passed.

'Oh yes. You too?'

'All right,' I said. 'By the by—tell you about it some other time—I think Herbert's prayer has been heard.'

*A FORGOTTEN POET OF THE PEASANTS.*

BY THE ARCHDEACON OF NORTHAMPTON.

A CENTURY ago, in one of the few dull parts of the delightful county of Northampton, there was issued by a bookseller of the obscure town of Market Deeping, bearing the eminent name of Henson, the prospectus of a volume of poems written by a very obscure young man. It was called ‘Proposals for publishing by Subscription a Collection of Original Trifles on Miscellaneous Subjects, religious and moral, in verse, by John Clare of Helpston.’ The only immediate result was that the would-be author, who was an agricultural labourer aged twenty-five, became a pauper. The farmer for whom he worked could not let him waste his time in scribbling. No doubt he thought, as Jowett thought of Swinburne when he was an undergraduate, that no good could come of him ‘unless he could be hindered from writing poetry’; and there really was much to be said for the farmer’s view. One cannot be expected to pay for hoeing turnips and finding poetry the only result. But no more than Swinburne could Clare be hindered from writing poetry. The bookseller had taken a pound from him for printing the prospectus, and now told him that he must have fifteen pounds more before the book could be printed; and there were only seven subscribers to it. The wonder is that there were so many, or that it was ever printed at all. The author described his poems with a modesty which was becoming rather than attractive, the greater part as ‘Juvenile productions,’ and the rest as ‘offsprings of those leisure intervals which the short remittance from hard and manual labour afforded to compose them.’ But for once a poet thought less of his poetry than did those who were capable and unbiased judges; and such persons before long appeared—almost dropped from the clouds. At the back of the modest prose ‘Proposals’ was printed a sonnet called ‘The Setting Sun.’ It is worth reprinting now, for it shows how this very ‘unlikely’ poet began.

‘Fair scene, how beauteous to a musing mind,  
That now swift slides from my enchanting view;  
The Sun sweet setting yon far hills behind,  
In other worlds his visits to renew:

What spangled glories all about him shine ;  
 What nameless colours, cloudless and serene  
 (A heav'ly prospect, brightest in decline),  
 Attend his exit from this lovely scene.  
 So sets the Christian's sun, in glories clear ;  
 So shines his soul at his departing here :  
 No clouding doubts, nor misty fears arise,  
 To dim Hope's golden rays of being forgiven ;  
 His sun, sweet setting in the clearest skies,  
 In safe assurance wings the soul to heaven.'

There are very few faults which these lines do not possess, whether as poetry or as theology, and it may well be that they would never have been written at all if Campbell had not published 'The Pleasures of Hope'; but still there is 'a something' about them which redeems them from entire ineptitude, and suggests that the man who wrote them with a pencil on a scrap of writing-paper resting on his hat, with a lime-scuttle for a chair, had a gift from the Muses which could not be hidden. And so it proved. John Clare came to be known because, for all his obscurity and ignorance, he was an incurable and irrepressible poet. Since he was a little boy he had written on fragments of anything like paper that he could lay his hands on, and, like a secretive hen, had hidden what he produced in the most unlikely places, whence his mother used to extract them to light the fire with, when there was one to light. Not the miserable cottage he lived in, not the dreary fields he worked on, not the absence of encouragement and of the very elements of the education which might make the steps to Parnassus not absolutely inaccessible, not want of food, or want of money, or want of sense, could prevent John Clare being a poet.

He wrote to begin with in the convention of his time. If he had lived in the days of 'The Shropshire Lad' or 'The Everlasting Mercy,' he would have written very differently : he would have pruned neither his language nor his thoughts : he would have painted poverty, and desire, and punishment, more directly. He was not scholar enough to write simply, yet one hardly knows enough to say that he did not write exactly as he felt. It was the fashion of the age then to think about the facts and passions of life very tepidly indeed, in comparison with the Elizabethans (shall we say ?) or the young lions of a later day. Even Byron, whom people thought so alarming, was a conventionalist, and

Burns very rarely indeed talked the real language of a peasant or wrote as he lived.

And convention made Clare write like a respectable church-goer ; it did not succeed in making him live like one. He had already learnt to enjoy the public-house : he lived next door to 'The Blue Bell' at Helpston and had worked there when he was a boy : and he could not go out of the village towards Peterborough without passing 'The Parting Pot.' There is a story, by the way, of an inn in a similar position, whose sign read, as you approached the village, 'The First Chance,' and as you left, 'The Last Chance.' John Clare, it seems very likely, took every chance. And when his poetry began to look like success, he must add to his qualifications that of a gay Lothario. Poor lad, he was only about five feet high, and was a thin, delicate fellow. The whole course of his life, from the cradle to the grave, is one for pity more than condemnation, and, as you read more and more of what he wrote, you begin to know that pity is akin to love.

The year 1818 was the turning point in Clare's career. Before that he had worked on a farm and in a pot-house, and he had been apprenticed to the head gardener at Burghley, where he had learned to drink, and whence he had run away. The farthest he had ever been was to Wisbech, where his uncle, a footman, had submitted him to the inspection of his master, Mr. Councillor Bellamy. The journey was by boat down the Nene, twenty-one miles from Peterborough, and past a riverside inn with another refreshing title, 'The Dog in a Doublet'; but John was too young for the public-house then. Mr. Bellamy had all the shrewdness of his famous family, and so the little yokel, who could write no hand that was at all like a lawyer's, was seen at once to be unfit for a clerk. This solitary adventure left him *ascriptus glebae* for the rest of his working days.

And the soil that he was attached to cannot be said to be very attractive. Helpston is a straggling village half-way between Peterborough and Stamford. It is on the border of the Lincolnshire fens. (Market Deeping, not far away, is actually in Lincolnshire.) Its houses, with only one or two exceptions (and those very good ones), are commonplace. If they cannot be expected to have anything of the dignity and grandeur of the architecture of Stamford, they yet do not deserve the description which Dickens gave of all Peterborough outside the Cathedral precincts. as 'like the back door to some other place.' But Helpston is not at all an

ugly village, only it is not suggestive—to-day at any rate—of poetic inspiration. The nearest approach one can find to romance is a caravan in which one adventurous family (to whom I take off my hat for their interest in John Clare and their kind help to the writer of these lines) spends happy summer holidays. The church is the feature of dignity in the village. It has an early fourteenth-century north aisle, and an interesting octagonal tower surmounted by a spire, and some Norman work, and an inscription ‘*ci git . . . ky pur la alme priera cent iours de pardon avera,*’ and such like features of interest, which few village churches indeed lack. In the church-yard, at the south of the chancel (where there is a capital ‘Churchwarden’s Gothic’ window of 1609), is Clare’s grave, with a decent stone over it, but the sycamore which the first of his biographers spoke of is no longer to be seen. On the village green is the pillar which was set up in 1869 to his memory, with some rather indifferent verses on three sides of it and his name and dates on the fourth. The best that can be said for it is that it is better than many of the war memorials which have been erected in this enlightened twentieth century. Perhaps none of these memorials are satisfying to any one. You come closer to Clare when you handle the glazed earthenware drinking-pot which was his and now belongs to Mr. Nichols of the old Vicarage. This has almost a history on it, which must often have refreshed the poet’s mind as its contents did his lips. It shows a four-wheeled chariot containing an Eastern potentate with a canopy over his head, drawn by two fine elephants tandem, with a driver on the box (if a chariot has a box) holding the reins. In the midst of the scene is a tree with spreading branches, and beyond it a larger four-wheeled dragon-shaped vehicle containing four persons of Assyrian appearance and probably noble birth, and again there is a canopy over the back seat. The driver sits on the dragon’s head, with whip in one hand and reins in the other, directing his steeds, which are two camels, humps and trappings proper. What a romantic story must the poet have developed from this pleasing scene; but, alas! his tale—if one he wrote—does not survive.

In the thatched cottage at Helpston Clare passed the early years of his life, and there he took Patty Turner, whom he married on March 16, 1820, when he was twenty-seven. Helpston he loved with the curious affection almost amounting to passion which country folk often have for the village of their birth. There he had learnt old songs from Granny Baines, a wonderful old woman

with a genius for weather prophecy and for remembering poetry, whom Sir Leslie Stephen, following the somewhat vociferous Mr. Frederick Martin, who wrote the poet's biography the year after his death, rather hastily described as 'the village cowherd.' When, in May 1832, he moved to the pretty cottage given him by Lord Fitzwilliam at Northborough he was miserable—and the lunacy which had already shown itself became incurable.

Now Glinton, to which on winter evenings the young ploughboy would trudge to night school, is a much more attractive place, with charming houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth century almost worthy of the Cotswolds, and a fine church with a splendid spire, and ever so many delightful things inside, including a fine forester with his bow. In the porch of the church, on the left of the door, you may still just decipher the circular inscription which J. C. cut in 1808 (when he was fifteen, poor boy) with the name of his first love 'Mary,' whose memory mingled so constantly with the last forty years of his life. Hard by—a mile's pleasant walk across the fields—is Peakirk, the Church of S. Pega, S. Guthlac's sister, which also is well worth inspection. Thence is a raised way along the bank of the Welland (a way for which money was left in 1566 to repair it—and Murray's Guide most strangely read the MS. 'waye' as 'image,' whence much confusion to the poor wayfaring archaeologist), to Crowland, noblest of fenland ruins. It is a country indeed of fine churches. A little farther on is Thorney Abbey with its noble west front; and from almost every point in this flat land we see the low central tower and the beautiful western pinnacles of the great minster of the Golden Borough. But Clare cared for none of these grandeurs; he only loved Helpston. He walked many a time to Walkherd Lodge on the way to Stamford, but he would not have lived there whatever the attraction.

In 1818 he was an agricultural labourer out of employment: and then came the excitement of his life. One Sunday morning in the next spring two 'real gentlemen'—the contrast, one fears, is to Mr. Henson—called on him at his father's cottage. He was fetched from a dance among the bottles at a house of some lively young men, which they called Bachelors' Hall, and made his bow to a bookseller and a newspaper proprietor from Stamford. One of these had read his prospectus and liked his sonnet. So, eventually, a bundle of ill-written and ill-spelled manuscripts found its way into the hands of Mr. Taylor, the intelligent publisher of Fleet

Street, partner to Mr. Hessey. He is described as 'a sedate looking gentleman in spectacles,' which recalls Mr. Pickwick, but his philanthropy though genuine was not so simple minded as that eminent man's. However, he admired Clare, and he came down to Stamford on purpose to see him. There in the elegant apartment of Mr. Octavius Gilchrist, over a grocer's shop, poet and publisher made friends.

How brief is fame! Octavius Gilchrist is forgotten. But he was quite a good man of letters in his day and wrote for Gifford and the *Quarterly*. Properly tartarly he was at times, being indeed at this very period engaged in mortal combat with that not very eminent poet the Reverend Mr. Bowles, to whom Gifford declared that he was 'in the extent and accuracy of his critical knowledge' as 'much superior as in good manners.' Gilchrist was an authority on old plays, an antiquary too, and a pleasant companion. He at once 'took up' John Clare and reviewed him in the *Quarterly* for May 1820, when the poems, which came out that year, had already reached a second edition. It was an excellent introduction of the young man to the world, describing his poems with considerable insight, and seasoning the criticism by a few personal remarks about the poet and his birthplace. The latter is 'a village most unpoetically situated'; the former was a twin, whose sister, 'who died immediately after the birth was, to use his mother's figure of speech, "a bouncing girl, while John might have gone into a pint pot."' Thus favoured by Mr. Taylor and Mr. Gilchrist, John Clare produced his poems in London, and they had an immediate and considerable sale. At first one wonders why. The reason is not altogether their merits.

The noble earl who is now Lord Lieutenant of Clare's county once delighted the House of Commons by telling it that he was not an agricultural labourer; but there is no reason to suppose that he then wished to publish a volume of poems. John Clare did; and in that relation the fact that he was an agricultural labourer was (in the deplorable language of to-day) almost his most important asset. Robert Bloomfield, the farmer's boy, was still living and still popular, and Robert Burns, the 'heaven-taught ploughman,' was not forgotten. Could not the Midlands produce a peasant poet of their own? They could and did. Warwickshire had given John Jordan of Stratford, wheelwright, and his poem on 'Welcombe Hills' in 1777. Northamptonshire should do better forty years later.

The publishers wrote a sensible preface to the little octavo,  
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which was only about 220 pages long. They fixed on its truth to Nature as the poetry's chief merit, and they said, very truly, that 'no poet of our country has shown greater ability, under circumstances so hostile to its development.' 'All this,' they added—and at whom were they pointing?—'is found here without any of those distressing and revolting alloys, which too often debase the native worth of genius, and make him who was gifted with powers to command admiration live to be the object of contempt and pity.' Was that a warning to the young poet? Time would show it to be needed and to be ineffectual.

Let us follow the poet's career before we talk of his poetry. The first thing it did for him was to introduce him into the society of gentlefolk and of literary men. It does not seem that he had hitherto known even a clergyman. The vicar of Helpston did not live in his parish—it is their custom, for there is another living not far away which they hold—and it seems likely that Clare knew little or nothing of him till in his later life he found him a generous friend. The life exempt from public haunt provides those who enjoy it not only with sermons in stones, but also (and that more frequently) with stones in sermons. Such one may guess to have been Clare's experience, or he would have said more about his parson than he does, and even might have greeted him with a hymn. For the ministers of 'other denominations' he does not seem to have had any greater affection; and though 'the Reverend Mr. Holland, minister of the Congregational Church at Market Deeping,' was very kind, this did not admit him to the highest circles of the aristocracy. His first biographer is extremely indignant that General Birch Reynardson sent him to dine in the servants' hall, that at Milton (not Melton as Sir Leslie Stephen thought) he had lunch in the kitchen with Lord Fitzwilliam's men servants, and that at Burghley he dined 'among the footmen and kitchen-maids.' The indignation was not felt by Clare: if it had been it would certainly have made verses. But the English poet had more sense. He would have been extremely uncomfortable in the dining-room. The agonies that he was to endure in London were soon to prove that.

On March 16, 1820 (as we have seen), he was married at Great Casterton to Martha Turner, who could not write her own name. A month later he went to London with the amiable Gilchrist. The night he arrived Madame Vestris was reciting one of his poems at Covent Garden.

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A German watchmaker, who was Mr. Gilchrist's brother-in-law, became his guide. And poor Clare was disappointed.

'Standing upon Westminster Bridge, he compared the Thames with Whittlesea Mere, and found it wanting; the sight of the Tower, of Newgate, and of Smithfield, engendered not the least admiration; and as for the Poet's Corner in the Abbey, he loudly declared that he could see no poetry whatever about it. But what hurt the feelings of Herr Burkhardt most of all, was the utter contempt Clare showed for the delights of Vauxhall. The tinsel and the oil-lamps, the wooded bowers and paper flowers, struck Clare as perfectly absurd, and he expressed his astonishment that people should go and stare at such childish things, with a world of wonder and of beauty lying all around it in the green fields. The worthy jeweller of the Strand was amazed, and privately confided in his brother-in-law that he thought his companion "a very stupid man from the country."'

These are the words of Mr. Frederick Martin, who wrote Clare's 'Life' a year after his death, with great pains, one can see, to obtain information, but with a good deal of peevish acerbity. Clare, no doubt, when he paid this first visit to London, felt just as Mr. Martin says, and looked as uncomfortable as could be, in the places he was taken to, in 'his threadbare suit of labourer's clothes, patched top and bottom, with leather baffles and gaiters to match.' ('Baffles' are as unknown to me as to Dr. Johnson and the Concise Oxford Dictionary of H. W. and F. G. Fowler.)

But if it was not the sights of London which pleased Clare—and it is remarkable how very few verses were devoted to the subject by one who seemed to versify everything in the world that he saw or thought of—the visit was memorable and delightful to him none the less. Mr. Taylor, like the publishers we read about with such awe in Thackeray, was fond of entertaining his writers at dinner and sprinkling the parties with personages 'of title.' Clare thus met Admiral Lord Radstock, an excellent man who loved poets and poetry as much as he loved the sea and was not made conceited by the Irish peerage which had come to him, in the way such things did, in 1800. He made a friend of Clare, spoke to him seriously and wisely as well as admiringly, and in spite of his 'smock frock, leather gaiters and brigand mantle' (as Mr. Martin calls the big cloak he had consented to receive from Mr. Taylor to conceal the deficiencies of his costume), took him about London with him and introduced him to many people. Only one

other friend did Clare make. This was Mrs. Emmerson, a lady who wrote a good deal herself and had a kind heart under an absurdly gushing manner. At first, as one reads what she wrote, one regards her as a combination of Mrs. Wititterly and Mrs. Leo Hunter. But, really, she was a kind-hearted person, though she did ‘burst into bitter laments’ at Clare’s ‘desolate appearance.’ She became his hostess, at his next visit to London, for quite a considerable time, though his manners often embarrassed her extremely; she copied out some of his verses—there is a MS. book in the Library of the Peterborough Natural History Scientific and Archaeological Society which I take to be largely in her hand—and appended to his poem ‘A Walk in the Fields’ the words, in pencil, ‘There are some *very sweet* conceits in this poem. E. L. E.’

The lady lived in Stratford Place, with her husband Mr. Thomas Emmerson, and her kindness to Clare stands beside that of Lord Radstock as the brightest episode of his life. She wrote to him, about once every three weeks, from 1820 to 1837, letters of extraordinary effusiveness and adulation but full of good feeling and disinterested kindness. Clare no doubt knew all about Burns, and fancied that he too was in love, or might pretend to be, with a lady above him. But the lady’s affection was what it was the fashion of her day to call ‘Platonic’; nor did Clare himself, in spite of an admiration for a French actress, Mdlle. Dalia of the Regency Theatre, and a devotion to the wife of Mr. Carey, the translator of Dante (whom he took for his daughter), exceed the limits of poetic propriety. The accounts of the tiny little fellow’s love fancies indeed make rather sad reading: they resemble the gambols of a baby hippopotamus. And his admirers would try to turn him into a lion.

It was a sad pity that in his visits to London he could not always be shepherded (or, as we still say in his local dialect, ‘tentied’) by the admirable Lord Radstock, or the shrewd Mr. Taylor, or even the rather silly Mrs. Emmerson. But he had associates less suitable: among them was an artist named Rippingille, who, says Mr. Frederick Martin, ‘was very fond of rambles through London, and very fond of pale ale, too.’ Neither of these affections did good to Clare, who shared them both. Whatever his ‘standard of intoxication’ may have been, it cannot be denied that he attained it somewhat frequently. But for that, it may be, he would not have suffered the sad fate which ended his career in long years of gloom.

For a while, during the years that followed the publication of

the 'Poems descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery,' Clare was happy in the kindness of many men of letters. Chiefest among them, and, one is sure, among the friendliest, was Charles Lamb. There is a charming letter of his to the Northamptonshire labourer, written in 1822, which says :

' Since I saw you I have been in France, and have eaten frogs. The nicest rabbity little things you ever tasted. Do look about for them. Make Mrs. Clare pick off the hindquarters, boil them plain, with parsley and butter. The forequarters are not so good. She may let them hop off by themselves.'

As this is written down to-day, we wonder if the search Lamb suggested could now be instituted in the Fens and by Helpston Heath : any addition to the meat ration would be welcomed ; but there would be no hope of butter and not very much of parsley. Clare tells how he met Lamb ' sitting with his tobacco-pipe and a great snuff-box in his left hand, into which he used to dip frequently,' and punning about poets and hackney coaches as he sipped from his tumbler ; Mary Lamb coming in ' with good-natured expostulation,' and Charles replying ' Do we not know the value of a rustic swain—I mean of res—restraint ? ' The biographer tells the story much more maliciously. Anyhow Clare said, ' I must *go*,' and went.

Tom Hood it was who first took Clare to see Lamb. And Octavius Gilchrist introduced him to Gifford, and then took him

' to the house of Mr. Murray, in Albemarle Street, in front of which stood a number of brilliant carriages. Mr. Gilchrist and his friend had to wait some time in an anteroom ; but, once admitted, both were received with great cordiality. Clare was much pleased with the simple, hearty manner of the great patron of literature, and the pleasure appeared to be mutual, for Mr. Murray, in his turn, began to converse in a very unrestrained manner, and, on leaving, bade Clare never to come to London without seeing him.'

As for the other men of letters whom the ' rustic swain ' came to know, some were polite, some kind, some condescending ; and the old oak cupboard in the Helpston cottage soon contained many presentation copies of the works of personages of eminence. De Quincey and Hazlitt, Allan Cunningham and Coleridge, Charles Elton and George Darley were among those he met in London, and every one who met him liked him. In the country appreciation was less general, but the earliest biographer's satirical references

to the owners of Milton and Burghley seem quite without justification : they were generous and thoughtful in their kindness ; and Clare would certainly have been as little at home in their dining-rooms as they would have been in his cottage. But it was only for a short time that the poet had the chance to enjoy the results of his fame.

The 30th of June 1823 was the critical point in Clare's life. He had reached the highest fame he could aspire to. His London experiences, and the neighbourhood of the 'Blue Bell,' his poverty, and perhaps his long rambles in the damp fenland, had made his fragile health more frail. And when he recovered from an illness sufficiently to walk into Stamford and inquire for his kind friend Gilchrist, who had long been sick, he was met at the door by the words, 'Mr. Gilchrist died an hour ago.' From that moment to the day of his own death, more than forty years after, John Clare was at odds with fate ; the next day the parish doctor was called to him, and he was either never 'out of the doctor's hands' or never out of the lunatic asylum, till the end of his life.

Early in 1824 there were signs of serious illness. A visit of two months to London in the summer of that year did not improve matters, and financial embarrassments added to his distress. He wrote too much. He wandered about too much. He had become a total abstainer ; but he had too little to eat. The work on the land he could get he was not equal to. And all the time he kept on writing, and some of his poems were published ; but none had any real success ; and the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' issued in 1827 with a charming frontispiece by Dewint, was almost a failure. There were too many long poems in it, and Clare could not make a long pastoral comical or tragical pastoral attractive, though Allan Cunningham rightly admired two of the poems — poems which had at least a hint of the approaching disaster.

The Diary of 1824-25 shows a gathering gloom, and it ends with a record of what he desires for his tombstone—'Here rest the hopes and ashes of John Clare.' The Annuals sought his aid—the 'Anniversary,' the 'Amulet,' the 'Juvenile Forget-me-not,' the 'Literary Souvenir'—but silk covers did not compensate for lack of payment, for if the editors were kind it was with an 'unremitting' kindness ; and sometimes they were not kind, and the egregious Mr. Alaric Watts deserved his sobriquet of Attila when he wrote to the poor sick peasant.

The last event in Clare's brief social fame was a visit to the

palace at Peterborough. Dr. Herbert Marsh, the bishop, must have been an eminent person, for a regius professor of ecclesiastical history devotes much more space to him than to S. Anselm in a recent account of the Church of England, and he can hardly have deserved Mr. Martin's ironical references to his port and his arrogance. Mrs. Marsh, too, is probably described too severely as 'an elderly lady of much energy,' for all we know of her relations with Clare shows kindness and consideration of a marked kind. She sent him comforts when he was ill : she had him to stay at the palace, whence, frightened at the prospect of meeting 'the dean, the archdeacon, and the canons,' he fled to Mrs. Emmerson in London : she made a lion of him, and having caught him again, took him to the Peterborough theatre to see 'The Merchant of Venice,' where he broke out in raving madness.

Lord Fitzwilliam had given him a charming little house at Northborough, but he had never been happy there. He pined for Helpston. He began to think of a child love, long dead, and to speak constantly to 'Mary.' By 1837 he was in a private lunatic asylum. In 1841 he escaped, and walked all the way to Peterborough, where he arrived nearly starving. His wife heard of his journey and came to meet him and took him home. There he wrote a most sad account of his pitiful adventure. A few weeks later he was taken to the Northampton County Asylum. Here he had a good deal of freedom, for he was quite harmless. He was often in the town, and would sit for hours—so a gentleman who has frequently seen him tells me—in the northern niche under the portico of All Saints Church. He was kindly treated, respected, waited on with affection. So he lived till May 20, 1860. And four days later he was buried in the churchyard of the village he loved.

It was a sad life from beginning to end, brightened but rarely by months of love, or respect, or success. Clare stands alone among the poets of England. He had not the mastering genius of Burns, nor had he his dominant animalism; and Sir Leslie Stephen very truly pointed the distinction between 'the most depressed English labourer and the independent Scottish farmer.' But the difference in ability, in education, in circumstances, in character, is not the most conspicuous distinction between them : more important still is the national difference. Burns was a Scot to the core : Clare was almost undiluted England. It may be that there was, in his rather mysterious pedigree, a touch of gipsy

blood ; it is, I think, not altogether unknown in Helpston to-day. But the 'Northamptonshire Peasant' who appeared before the public in 1820 was, in all his thoughts, his view of Nature, his moralising of life, even his ambition and his affections, thoroughly, unmistakably, narrowly, English, and English of the Midlands. He was a Mercian poet come to birth again at the end of the eighteenth century. Guthlac would have understood him : so, across the centuries and the centre of England, would Robert of Gloucester. All that could dimly suggest a foreign ancestry was his slight build, his diminutive height, his 'keen, eager eyes, high forehead, long hair falling down in wild and almost grotesque fashion over his shoulders' ; but such features may well look back to the distant Iberian strain which constantly reappears, after such long ages, in many parts of England. His highly strung nature, ready to weep or sing, his nervous excitement, his kinship with the birds and beasts and trees, are like those of the old hermit of Crowland, who knew the land he loved eleven hundred years before and loved it with as ardent and sensitive an affection. Bloomfield 'the Farmer's Boy,' to whom it is so natural to compare him, was really not a little of a Cockney. If one goes to London when one is eleven years old, reads the *London Magazine* and manufactures Aeolian harps, though one may by birth be a farm labourer, the soil does not cling to one's pen. Both Clare and Bloomfield began by reading Thomson, but the influence is superficial on the one, while on the other it abides, with reminiscences of Shenstone and the society of sympathisers whose knowledge of shepherdesses and their dwellings went no nearer than a cottage *ornée*. It is strange that Lamb warned Clare against provincial phrases and county Cockneyism, and recommended Shenstone as a model. But Clare was a genuine labourer and a genuine poet. His first claim to attention has never been better expressed than it was by Octavius Gilchrist in the *Quarterly* for May 1820 :

'Clare is rather the creature of feeling than of fancy. He looks abroad with the eye of a poet, and with the minuteness of a naturalist, but the intelligence which he gains is always referred to the heart ; it is thus that the falling leaves become admonishers and friends, the idlest weed has its resemblance in his own lowly lot, and the opening primrose of spring suggests the promise that his own long winter of neglect and obscurity will yet be succeeded by a summer sun of happier fortune. The volume, we believe, scarcely contains a poem in which this process is not adopted ; not one in which

imagination is excited without corresponding tone of tenderness, or morality.'

The hope was not fulfilled; and there was convention of a rather tedious sort in the expression of it; but the literary grocer and antiquary saw clearly where the young peasant's merit lay.

Of course, a great deal of his work is not really original. Not only did he intentionally copy the old poets, Andrew Marvell, Sir Henry Wootton, and others, in a fashion which almost any one could use, and write old ballads after he had read Ritson's and Percy's collections; but he certainly imitated Crabbe and Burns most conspicuously among his contemporaries. He had read Byron too, and even Keats, one can easily tell. Thomson it was who first taught him the manner of lisping in numbers, but he soon abandoned the lisp and spoke in the manner of the fields, not of the drawing-room or the summer-house. Masses of his manuscript survive in the Library of the Peterborough Natural History Society; I have five volumes before me as I write. For the most part they are written in a large scrawling, sprawling hand, evidently very quickly and freely, with none of the painful accuracy which marks the work of so many ill-educated scribes. Punctuation does not exist, spelling bears little relation to ordinary usage and is often, but not always, phonetic. Scraps afterwards to be worked up are interspersed with poems ready for publication: when they have been in one way or another disposed of a line is drawn through them, and often the words 'done with' are written at the side. There are some interesting 'old melodies' which he heard from his father and mother among them, and often prose notes, and fragments of diary, and beginnings of essays. The prose fragments are no better than a child's attempts at self-expression, largely repetitions of others' thoughts, almost always commonplace. Among the poetic 'scraps,' as he calls them, there is often genuine ore. A good deal is corrected, pruned, rewritten; but generally Clare seems to have written freely, quickly, at a single impulse: some no doubt are 'fair copies.' One volume is copied for him in what looks like Mrs. Emmerson's hand. All these MS. volumes, it may be noticed, are written on both sides of the page; so that it is probable that the MSS. sent to the printer have been destroyed; while the MSS. of the 'Asylum Poems,' several of which were published by Mr. Cherry in his excellent biography in 1873, are not, it seems, to be discovered.

It is on the 'Asylum Poems,' Clare's most discerning editor thinks, that the Northamptonshire peasant's fame must rest. And, certainly, he never surpassed the tragic power of some of the last lines he ever wrote, which were printed in the Report of the St. Andrew's Hospital for 1864, the year of the poet's death.

' I am ! yet what I am none cares or knows,  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost ;  
I am the self-consumer of my woes,  
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,  
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost ;  
And yet I am ! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dreams,  
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,  
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems ;  
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—  
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod ;  
A place where woman never smil'd or wept ;  
There to abide with my creator, GOD,  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept ;  
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie,  
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.'

That these wonderful lines were written in a lunatic asylum, forty years after the writer had received Charles Lamb's good advice, addressed, it is plain, to one of whose powers he thought very lightly, is a marvel of literary history. Such power is rare in the Northamptonshire rustic, and there are few traces of it before his last sad years. But the brightness of the early songs has great charm, and that not only by contrast ; and there is a lift and a lilt in the songs—such as 'Adieu to my false love for ever'—which shows something more than mere facility of utterance. The poems of pure country description are unique, as records by a labourer in the fields of what he saw and felt. Here is one, by no means the best, taken at random ; it is called 'In Hilly-Wood' (which is quite near Helpston).

' How sweet to be thus nestling deep in boughs,  
Upon an ashen stoven pillowing me ;  
Faintly are heard the ploughmen at their ploughs,  
But not an eye can find its way to see.

The sunbeams scarce molest me with a smile,  
So thick the leafy armies gather round ;  
And where they do, the breeze blows the while,  
Their leafy shadows dancing on the ground.  
Full many a flower, too, wishing to be seen,  
Perks up its head the hiding grass between.—

In mid-wood silence, thus, how sweet to be ;  
Where all the noises, that on peace intrude,  
Come from the chittering cricket, bird, and bee,  
Whose songs have charms to sweeten solitude.'

Here, too, there is at least a touch of sadness ; and sadness (how could it be otherwise ?) is never absent for long from Clare's poetry. Indeed, over almost all he wrote hangs the shadowing thought of death ; but death a happy, not a wholly sad, close to life, as in 'The Dying Child,' or when he writes of the 'Graves of Infants.'

' Infants' grave mounds are steps of angels, where  
Earth's brightest gems of innocence repose.  
God is their parent, so they need not fear ;  
He takes them to His bosom from earth's woes,  
A bud their life-time and a flower their close.'

Death is happy to him when it is a child's death. But after all the misery of struggle, of poverty, sickness, madness even, it is still happy. So John Clare, through all his sorrows, still feels, because, as he said

' Love lives beyond the tomb  
And earth, which fades like dew.  
I love the fond,  
The faithful and the true.'

It is a fit epitaph for him as he rests in Helpston churchyard in the village he loved.

## MINERS IN THE WAR ZONE.

*EXTRACTS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED DIARY OF THE WAR.*

BY STEPHEN DAKEYNE.

THE following four Miners' Agents left Charing Cross Station at 12.50 on January 15, 1917:—‘Tom H——, Harry J——, Jack B——, and Ste K——.’

They disembarked at Calais, as Boulogne was closed, and settled into the waiting cars for a two hours' journey to the Guests' Château. It was a picturesque drive, with the strong head-lamps illuminating the snow-covered roads. The Château itself is a great barn-like place, with the portraits of French aristocrats looking down from the walls upon the British invaders. Never before could these pictures have seen such beings as these four labour leaders appeared, each body wrapped up in three overcoats and their legs encircled by extremely new gaiters. The size of the house took them by surprise, and Tom H—— said to me in an awed tone, ‘Aye, this place must have belonged to some rich folk !’

After a plain but ample dinner they lost their shyness, and thawed considerably, telling stories until our host bundled them off to bed at 11.45. At 11.55 burly Jack B—— arrived back again in pyjamas, asked for another cigar, and settled down to tell us the full and detailed history of his family until 1.30 in the morning !

However, we got him off to bed in time to get up again the following morning, and to start at 8 A.M. Our destination was the Somme battlefield, which was only four hours away. On the way we called at General R——’s Headquarters, where a G.S.O.1 and a G.S.O.3 were assigned to us as guides. They first explained the proposed route on a large-scale map, and then displayed the tank which at that time ornamented the front drive of the Château.

The route to the Somme took us up the Bapaume road, branching off to the right by La Boiselle, where two or three twisted iron railings were all that remained of the church. Across a ridge we went to Contalmaison, where a newly-constructed railway line crossed the road, and then on to Guillemont and back by the Mametz Wood to Fricourt. No words could describe the road. It took a good five hours' trudging, after leaving the cars, to cover the two miles

allotted for our walk, so sticky was the mud and so many were the shell-holes, into which it was easy to slip. A certain number of Boche shells were coming over, and Ste K—— remarked to Colonel L——, 'Mind thee, old pal, if owt happens to us, tha'll be to blame.' The distinguished G.S.O.1 was not used to being addressed in this familiar way, but took it with a smile.

Within sight of Delville Wood we had lunch to the accompaniment of half a dozen batteries close by. Each kept up a slow but steady fire every few minutes. The whole scene was quite matter of fact, and officers and men around strolled along completely unconcerned at the Boche shells which were falling behind us. The noise here inspired the miners to ask that they too might be allowed to fire a gun. Fortunately for them, an officer in a neighbouring dugout was found, who agreed to fire a gun for their special benefit. They were then allowed to pick up empty 18-pounder shell-cases, which were lying there in quantities. Each tucking one under his arm, they scrambled on their way over the mangled ground. The progress was slow, with the result that we were three-quarters of an hour late for the invitation to tea extended by General R——. He gave us tea in the parlour of his Château—a plain tea with jam and brown bread. To his surprise, at the end of tea Jack B—— rose and delivered a five minutes' oration of thanks, and at the same time described his impressions of the Somme. He said that it appeared to him that the military work was to spread desolation, destruction and waste. After they had killed everything living, so that no trace of village or vegetation remained, the soldiers then had to make the whole place live again. Nothing had impressed him more than the sight of thousands of men behind the lines building roads and creating railways practically under shell-fire. Military work seemed to him to be first killing and then recreating. After this expression of his views General R—— asked the party to go upstairs to his room. This was a small study looking over the garden of the Château, from which the battle of the Somme had been fought. He explained how the staff sitting in that room could decide on the plan of action, first by studying the large-scale map, then by inspecting the photographs taken at various heights from aeroplanes, thus visualising the landscape, and finally by personal reconnaissance. One photograph of Guillemont before the bombardment showing the houses and church standing untouched, and the photograph of Guillemont after the bombardment in which not a sign of man's handiwork could be seen, was given to Jack B——, President of the party, as a souvenir.

Ste K—— immediately remarked in a loud voice from the background, ‘ If it wasn’t so dom’d cheeky, I should have asked for one for mysen.’ General R—— thereupon presented him with a composite aeroplane photograph showing the German trenches before one of the attacks on the Ancre. After warming up the party with old French brandy, we returned via Amiens and Doullens. So all were happy.

That night General H——, who was in charge of all the tunnelling companies in France, dined with us. He threw new light upon the arrangements made for fighting the Boche underground, and showed how completely we had gained superiority underground since last August. Here again, however, the urgent need of men was shown—especially of men who had practical and skilled mining experience. The Miners’ Agents went to bed that night fully impressed with the need of more men and more material.

The following day they went via St. Omer to Ypres. The long road leading into Ypres, going over the canal, was bounded on each side by fields pockmarked with shell-holes. By this time the realisation of the first and second battles of Ypres came upon the party as they drove along this tragic road. The ground was covered with snow, and the water in the shell-holes was frozen. This mantle scattered by Nature hid, both in and around Ypres, most of the ravages caused by the guns, but even so the gaunt desolation of the tottering walls and homes lying open to the sky silenced even their cheery humour. They began to look more serious after a sentry warned us not to go in the square, as a ‘ good many shells had already fallen there that morning.’ As we passed by the mill, Tom H—— complained of sore feet, and wanted to rest. However, the prospect of lunch at the ‘ Bluff ’ cheered him up, and we walked along the road out to ‘ Gordon Post.’ The trees on the left of the road were hung with netting covered with foliage in order to conceal traffic on the road, and if it had not been such a snowy, misty day, such a large party as we were, guided though we were by the G.S.O.1 of General Plumer’s Army, would not have been allowed to proceed. All under the road were dugouts which in wet weather were flooded out. We visited one dugout in the grounds of a château and found it consisted of two rooms lit by four candles each. This was the headquarters of a brigade, and the brigadier greeted our party gaily and entertained them in his mess to a glass of ‘ Black and White.’ Nothing more impressed the Miners’ Agents during their visit abroad than the fact that a general was living in a tiny dugout. They

mentioned the fact specially when they got back to England, describing their reception by the Higher Command in these words : 'Why, if you were to dress us up in generals' uniforms we could not have been more genial and pleasant than those generals were ! '

Ste K—— told me that he had never realised before that human intercourse between the classes could be so cordial and courteous. Incidents like meeting the general in his dugout had this effect upon their minds, and helped to disabuse them of certain misconceptions.

We went a mile farther along a duck-board by the canal bank. A false step, and you were thigh-deep in glutinous mud. It was easy to understand how many brave men had been drowned as they went along that walk during the second battle of Ypres. A Canadian major, commanding a tunnelling company, was our guide at this place, and took us into his headquarters for a lunch off Army rations. A shade of disappointment passed over the faces of the Agents. It was discovered afterwards that this was due to the fact that they had interpreted 'The Bluff' to mean 'The Bluff Hotel,' evidently expecting to find a hotel within 300 yards of our front trenches ! Instead of which they had their food 30 feet below the surface, the guns roaring continuously. This misconception shows how ignorant of the essential facts of existence even some of the best labour leaders are. They were genuinely disappointed not to find a hotel, and later they exaggerated the dangers and noise of the shelling. Except in one case no shell came nearer than 200 yards of our party, but the two hours passed at that place were afterwards described on every occasion as the heavy bombardment which they had endured outside Ypres !

General P—— entertained the party to tea and, having received a timely warning, was not so surprised at the inevitable speech-making after tea. He also offered them a glass of brandy, and for this was characterised by them as being a 'thorough gentleman.'

The following day was Thursday. As the Agents had been out for nearly eighteen hours the previous day, it was decided to let them down lightly. They first went to see the Printing Department at G.H.Q. A War Office civil servant was sent out with the original Expeditionary Force to start the Stationery Department. He had originally three assistants, but now had a staff of over 2,000. The visit brought home to the Agents the enormous amount of work which has to be done actually behind the fighting line.

Later they went on to G.H.Q. and lunched with the Director of

Military Intelligence. The conversation after lunch was led by him on to the question of labour and the peace movement in this country. Harry J—— was very insistent that labour was perfectly sound, and that the voting at the following week's Labour Conference would show conclusively how small and divided were the pacifists. Ste K—— took the line that the secrecy and skill with which the pacifists were working made them all the more dangerous. He quoted the constant visits of a former labour agent to all Trades Councils under the auspices of the Union of Democratic Control as an example of the insidious way in which the pacifists were working. Further, they pointed out that the injustice done by pensions being due and not paid to time, and all the other grievances, might easily bring about a reaction against military service either before or after the end of the war.

It was suggested that a certain organisation was already organising returned soldiers, making use of their grievances and consolidating their opinions with a view to their possible use as a solid vote in the future. The Miners' Agents were very much against the promoters of this movement, whom they regarded as purely out for self, and not representatives of labour at all.

The following day the party left France. The following week brought about two developments, each of which was connected with their visit:—(1) About January 23rd the Home Office announced that, with the agreement of the Miners' Federation, exemption should be withdrawn from miners who had entered the pits since August 1915. (2) The Miners' Agents, on the 22nd, were present at a conference before the Labour Conference. They had 600,000 votes in their power, and it was decided by the majority to throw these votes in opposition to every resolution which had been tabled by the Independent Labour Party. These 600,000 card votes made all the difference to a resolution calling for immediate negotiations with Germany being lost or carried. Actually it was substantially defeated.

It cannot, of course, be stated how great was the influence of seeing for themselves. But without doubt the effect of personal and direct influence between the leaders of labour and other classes makes for sympathy, and the avoidance of misunderstandings.

I have seen my four friends several times since then, and they are strong for Co-operation, and against class division, in the reconstruction of our country.

*A CHILD'S FANCY.*

Oh, had I magic gold to spend,  
What treasure should I get?

I have a secret splendid thought  
That none has dreamed of yet:

I'd buy a hundred fairy lights with ev'ry shining pound,  
And hang them in the apple-tree when blossom-time came round.

The whole day long I'd hang them there,

And hide them out of sight:

Green, amethyst and gold and blue,  
Rose-red and silver-white;

And nestled deep among the drifts of light and petalled snow,  
My little crystal lanterns should sparkle row on row.

One yellow lamp for the pine-tree top

That holds the dropping moon—

One great round lamp!—and then I'd say

'Dear night, be swift, be soon!

Come sailing from the crimson west, come creeping, night, to me';  
Sweep, sweep upon your brooding wings, and fall around my tree.

Come shimmering, oh wings of night;

Half hide and half display

This blossom tossed against the stars

In fretted curves of spray.'

And when I'd called my night of Spring, before I turned to go,  
I'd sing a little fairy charm that only I may know.

Then when the waking stars came out,

I'd hold my breath and hide

Till lo! a whisper stirred the tree,

And touched my ear and died:

So quick! with beating heart I'd run, and then—and then I'd see  
That Someone flying in the night had lit my lamps for me!

And oh! my tree would flicker up

With breaking points of light,

And flames and shadows—red and gold,

Blue, silver, green and white,

With one lamp for the tree that holds the moon upon her arm,  
And a song, a song for me to sing,—a little fairy charm.

R. N. LEHMANN.

*MEMORIES OF A MARINE.*

BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.

## V. UP THE STRAITS IN THE NINETIES (I).

BETWEEN the years 1886 and 1892 a vast change came over the appearance of the Mediterranean Fleet. Masts and yards disappeared from ships of the line. The seamen of the upper yards and tops, the links between the days of steam and the days of sails with their Nelson tradition, were still in the service, but the vocation of the old type 'sailor' had definitely passed away. Tradition dies hard in the Navy. A ship's quarter-bill was still made out on the old lines and included even 'royal-yardmen,' but the royal yards on which they displayed their nerve and agility no longer existed. There was no longer the desperate competition against time between mast and mast in the same ship, or between the different ships of a squadron. The old heavy masts with all their top-hamper had gone, and the bewildering masses of halyards, lifts, braces, sheets, topping-lifts, and all the rest of them no longer mystified the uninitiated or hampered the deck space. Pole masts there were, sarcastically referred to as soldiers' masts, with fighting tops, the light yards fixed in place and intended only for display of signal bunting, of steaming cones, of evolution number-flags and of helm signals. Instead of seeing little besides masts, ropes, and rigging from the conning-tower, its occupants had nearly an all-round view of the horizon, and a fair chance of seeing something of the enemy.

Gunnery was slowly making progress and coming into its own, and attention was being paid to battle training. Fleet manoeuvres were devoted to that object, and Sir George Tryon, the Commander-in-Chief, was looked upon by the service, and by the world in general, as a leader amongst the admirals of his time in originality of thought and skill in handling a fleet so as to gain by manoeuvre an advantage in gun-power over an enemy in action. One of the points he constantly made was that decentralisation was essential in a fleet. An admiral must make his general plans clear to all his captains, and must trust chiefly to their loyalty and initiative in carrying out those plans during the course of an action. His

view was that, in a battle, the Admiral would soon be unable to give orders to his fleet by the only methods, flag signals, then available for his use. The signal books were huge volumes containing voluminous instructions for every conceivable description of formation and manoeuvre, most of which required long hoists of many coloured flags. The agility and lightning movements of the old royal-yardmen were emulated by the signalmen on the admiral's bridge in order to bend the flags in the right order on to the halyards with the utmost speed when the Flag-Lieutenant gave the word. These masses of men could not have survived for many minutes in a close action, and there was no space to accommodate them all under the armour protection with their bulky equipment of bunting and halyards. Admiral Tryon's whole attention was devoted to simplifying these arrangements for fleet control, and the simplest of all was his 'T.A.' system, which meant that the captains of ships in his fleet must manoeuvre without signals and divine the Admiral's instructions by watching his movements. In order to obtain an advantage over a hostile fleet it was generally recognised that if the fleets were formed in 'line ahead' (ships one behind the other on the same course), a great advantage would be obtained by 'crossing the T,' because the fleet representing the top of the T would be able to concentrate the fire of many guns against a few guns of the fleet represented by the upright stroke of the T. Then again the distribution of the guns in each individual ship would have a great influence upon the tactics and manoeuvres that would be most effective. Most foreign ships of that time could develop a far heavier gun-fire ahead than they could astern, and one of Admiral Tryon's ambitions was, if possible, to cross the T astern of a hostile fleet rather than ahead. This he once explained to me in confidence, drawing diagrams on his blotting paper, when I got to know him better and had got over a certain fear of his dominating personality, which was shared, by the way, by far more important folk than myself. I think that he realised the importance of the personality of a Commander in high command, and perhaps posed a little, not by any means from smallness of motive, but for the good of the service, and he would not have objected to the 'Tryon T' inspiring in his captains the same confidence that the 'Nelson Touch' did in those of old days.

Arriving at Malta in March 1892 I found the harbour full of ships of queer design and outline, of samples, we could almost say, no more than two of each class, such as the *Victoria* and *Sans*

*Pareil*, *Nile* and *Trafalgar*, or *Edinburgh* and *Colossus*; the classes bore little resemblance to each other, the strangest sample of design was represented by the *Polyphemus*, in which the torpedo took the place of the gun as a main armament. She sought protection from the enemy's fire by submerging nearly all her hull by taking sea-water into special compartments. The chief feature of all the battleship designs was very low free-board, raising doubts in the mind whether the guns could be fought at all in a sea-way. I think that the 'defence' policy of the Government, which prevailed far into the eighties of last century, and devoted more attention to what had to be protected than to the hostile forces which were the source of danger, had reflected itself in our ship designs. We had not then realised that the best form of protection was to knock out an enemy by being before him with rapid and accurate fire, by hitting, and going on hitting. Another feature was that most ships had very little auxiliary armament, only big guns and a few small short-range six-pounders, which were thought sufficient to beat off the attacks of the torpedo craft of those days. The *Victoria*, the flagship I had been ordered to join, had two 100-ton guns firing from a turret ahead, and one ten-inch gun firing astern. Her outline was ugly, her general shape resembling the form of a boot. She had three little masts forward, arranged in a triangle so that the other ships of the fleet could use them to give them a line for keeping station on in 'quarter-line,' and one pole mast aft with an armoured top and a couple of yards for signal halyards. She was in dry dock when I joined and reported myself to the Flag-Captain, Maurice Bourke.

Marine officers going to sea for the second time are put to a severe test, which must be faced and gone through satisfactorily or their whole lives will be embittered. They find that most of their former chums and contemporaries in the Navy have passed over their heads in the service. Those who were lieutenants may be still in the ward-room, probably as commanders, but some will have left the ward-room and become captains of their own ships. The midshipman and naval cadets will be lieutenants or perhaps commanders. All will be doing wider and more responsible work than when the original friendships were formed; the marine officer will still be doing the same or very similar work. In the nineties the fact had not been realised that the main excuse for leaving the marine officer without employment at sea had disappeared with the masts and sails. He still, excepting at General Quarters,

was left in idleness in the ward-room, while all his men were usefully employed in various evolutions. In my own case this drawback was perhaps rather accentuated ; seven years before I had had the complete charge of a large flagship's detachment of Marines because my majors were changed several times, and two of them, being unable to stand the climate, had spent much time in hospital or on the sick-list. The *Victoria's* detachment was smaller, and also in charge of a major, accommodation was very short, and in order to provide me with a cabin while I was trying to establish the first Intelligence Department in the Fleet, the arrangement had been made that the subaltern of Marines should be withdrawn temporarily from the ship's complement and that I should take his cabin and do his work. That consisted chiefly of turning out with the guard and presenting arms to senior officers passing or visiting the ship. When in Malta the Marines of the Fleet were landed weekly for drill on the Naval recreation ground at Corradino, and I did the duties of Adjutant to the Fleet battalion. It was all what an old chum called 'good discipline of character' after spending two years at the Staff College where men are handled—on paper—by the hundred thousand.

It was on the Corradino ground that I first met Admiral Tryon. The ward-room of the *Victoria* was noted for containing many good cricketers, and we had many matches on that ground. The wicket was on asphalte, covered with cocoanut matting ; the fielding was on limestone with plenty of nubbly bits which take the skin off the back of the fingers of a fieldsman used to grass until he finds out that the rough surface also makes the ball jump, so that it is seldom touching the surface of the ground, and the best thing to do is to dispose one's hands accordingly. Cricket balls on such ground have to be dyed red all through, or they soon become the same colour as the ground. The Admiral used to come up in the evenings to watch cricket after his day's work in the office in Strada Mezzodi, on the other side of the Grand Harbour. Captain Bourke introduced me to him one evening and I must confess that I felt extremely timid. He was a very big man with a dominating personality, and he had a way which has been described as making his two eyes look like one, which seemed to bore through you. After a little talk about the cricket he told me his ideas of the lines on which he wanted me to work, and gave me the run of his office at Admiralty House, where a room was prepared for my use. I was to see any papers I wanted to, secret or otherwise, and could

get to work as soon as I liked. As a result of the establishment of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty five years before, much printed information had come out which all wanted arranging for reference, and there were big gaps in the information applying to the Mediterranean which must be filled up. Another point was that much information constantly came through to supplement the printed reports, which must be therefore kept up to date if they were to be of any practical use. It is too soon to write fully about Naval Intelligence work in the Mediterranean in the nineties, but a few tales can be told without danger of indiscretion.

Take, for instance, the defence of the Grand Harbour of Malta, which has now been completely altered by changes in policy and the construction of a breakwater. In those days there were many authorities concerned in making the harbour easy of access for our own ships, and difficult of approach by hostile vessels. There was a fair-way buoy of pole shape to indicate the channel. On the same side of the harbour was a torpedo of a type controlled from the shore. It was made to sally forth and chase any enemy ship which it was intended to destroy. There were observation mines, close under the fire of the guns, to obstruct the channel. There was also a boom to be stretched across the entrance of the harbour in order to keep out hostile torpedo craft. All were under different authorities, and it had been nobody's business to co-ordinate their efforts. That sort of work fell upon the new Intelligence Department, and it then appeared that the torpedo could not be run out unless the fair-way buoy, required by friendly ships for safe navigation, was first hauled out of the way; and if the observation mines went off they would blow up the moorings of the boom.

As affecting readiness for war, much information was available in the form of dull-looking returns which no one had time to read and to check thoroughly. Some very interesting points soon cropped up. There was a shortage of about 65 per cent. in the reserve of gunpowder (we used powder for the heaviest guns in those times) kept at Malta for the Fleet, because of insufficient Naval magazine accommodation. It appeared on inquiry that large magazines in Army charge were filled with ammunition for a siege train, and apparently had been since the Crimean war. There seemed to be some want of a sense of proportion, or a co-ordinating authority with common sense. Then, more serious, was the question

of the supply of coal available from local privately-owned stores. The returns showed that in case of emergency somewhere about 80,000 tons would be obtainable for the Fleet by purchase in Malta. It seemed a good idea to check this figure, so one day I rode round the various stores and looked in. There was scarcely any coal to be seen. The next step was to visit each merchant and ask him whether he could supply within twenty-four hours the amount which he had given as his average stock. Seeing a chance of doing business A. said 'I not got it, Signor, but I get it from B. by to-morrow.' Visits to B., C., D., and E. produced similar answers, each would get the coal from the other, and I doubt whether there was an appreciable amount in the whole of their stores at that time. Reliance on such statistics might have held up the whole strategical plans for several days, and days mean much in Naval strategy.

Another rather interesting example of the uselessness of returns, unless it is somebody's business to read and verify them. In the Grand Harbour of Valetta there were always numbers of small sailing vessels of queer rigs and piratical appearance loading or discharging cargoes. If they shipped any arms or explosives a return had to be rendered showing the amounts embarked. These returns were dull looking documents full of dates, queer names, and figures, but an examination repaid the labour when it was found that one vessel cleared twice in ten days for 'Cyprus.' Investigation showed that she was engaged in trade in arms and munitions between Malta and the African coast in Tripoli, and this had been going on under the noses of the authorities for an indefinite period. Powder was packed in pickle-jars.

It is not possible to give details of other things: knowing the movements of foreign war vessels (the most important of all subjects of course), coast protection, and such-like matters; but telegraph cables can be referred to without indiscretion. There were several hundred cable landing-places, many important cables, and very little known about them by the Navy. Obtaining and classifying the information involved a good deal of hard work. Then again, the business of the Navy being to protect trade it was obviously important to find out all about British commerce in the Mediterranean, the carrying trade in British merchant ships coming up the Straits, and the mercantile traffic through the Suez Canal. All that opened up a wide field for investigation; so did defence questions in Egypt, from the Naval aspect. I think I have given

enough detail to show the interest in the work, and I expect that the Naval Staff of the present day will wonder how things could have remained so at such a recent date, but I think that the explanation is that the British command of the sea had for many years been unchallenged. Individual ships were worked up to concert pitch of cleanliness and smartness, and the fleet manoeuvres prescribed in the signal books were constantly practised. The German Army system of instant readiness for war, of meticulous preparation to strike quickly in various hypothetical cases, and of carefully worked out plans of campaign, had not at that time been applied to our sea forces. Much was done in this direction by Sir George Tryon, Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, and other admirals who succeeded them in the Mediterranean Command, including Sir John Fisher. Instead of one junior marine officer being attached to the Secretary's office for a part of his time, admirals are now provided with a Chief of Staff and a large following; but now that it has all been started and is in working order I don't think that anyone can have the same interesting work that there was when all the ground had to be broken afresh, and the seeds of the present system were sown.

All this reads rather pedantically I am afraid. The office work involved took about eight hours a day or so, and when we went to sea there was a good chance of getting on with it, as there were no demands for ceremonial guard-work at any odd hour. The great point was that when the paper work, statistics, returns, organisations, and so on tended to get monotonous one had only to think of the issues involved, if ever war should come, and it was a great advantage to have served beforehand in the Admiralty for a few years and to have some knowledge of the big pattern, of which the work filled a considerable part.

During the summers of 1892-95 we had delightful cruises and visited many familiar spots. When I was first up the Straits in the eighties we were constantly drawn to the eastward by the political situation, but this time we were more free, and saw something of the whole coast of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar, along the shores of Spain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Greece, and Turkey to Alexandria, and I also spent a shooting holiday in Tunis and Algeria, which completed the circuit, missing out the French Riviera and the coasts of Benghazi and Tripoli. We also visited most of the Isles: the Balearic Isles, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and the islands in the Adriatic and Ægean. Of the places

visited while Sir George Tryon was in command, the Dardanelles and Bosphorus stand out most clearly. We were anchored at Vourlah Bay in the Gulf of Smyrna when the invitation came for the Admiral to visit the Sultan (Abdul Hamid) at Constantinople, and I was one of the fortunate ones selected to go on the Staff. Just before we left Vourlah in the *Surprise* a serious accident occurred at General Quarters to the lieutenant (The Hon. F. C. Addington) in charge of the *Victoria's* 10-inch gun. He was a man of very stout build. In getting on to the sighting platform as the gun was being trained round he was jammed between the loading screen and the gun shield and squeezed by the hydraulic pressure into a space which, measured across his body, could not have been more than three or four inches. I had charge of the nearest six-pounder guns and got to him just as the pressure had been taken off and he had fallen back on to the platform. We moved him carefully to his cabin, but never expected to see him alive on our return from the trip. I may as well add that when we did come back a week or so afterwards we found him sitting up in bed, and were allowed to see him only on the understanding that we must not make him laugh too much (he was a very cheery soul) or his broken ribs might stick through his heart.

Every moment of the trip to Constantinople in the Admiral's yacht was enjoyed, and there was something of interest to look at the whole way. First Tenedos, with Besika Bay opposite, and the plains of Troy. Then the entrance to narrower waters between Sedd-ul-Bahr and Koun Kaleh forts, then the broad channel gradually narrowing to form the celebrated Dardanelles Narrows opposite to Chanak. There were large parties at work on the forts, and thereby hangs a tale. The Admiral sent for me and said 'Did you notice anything about those working parties we saw?' I said I supposed it was a display for our benefit. He said 'You should have noticed that only the spades of those above Chanak, where the Turkish Pasha met us, were bright—the ones below that were all dull, and the parties had obviously been doing no digging.' With the Pasha sent by the Sultan to receive us came several diplomats from the Embassy in spotless attire, wearing well-brushed silk hats, and after the usual formalities we proceeded on our way against the strong current that increases so much the effectiveness of the defences against war vessels trying to force the passage. To the best of my knowledge there were no efficient minefields in the channel in those days,

but the forts held a formidable armament of heavy Krupp guns, of which the number was being increased, and the defences on the hills behind against attack from the land side were obviously being greatly strengthened. We passed on through the Sea of Marmora, after looking at the Bular Lines on our left and the Nagara forts on our right, and were lucky in arriving off the Golden Horn at sunrise with the minarets all glowing in the early sunlight, and a slight mist hanging low over Constantinople and the shores of the Bosporus.

From the moment we landed we were feted in various ways and taken to different places of interest. We saw the ceremony of the Selamik in great comfort, were presented to the Sultan after his attendance in the Mosque, and then we were regaled with fruit served on golden plates and Turkish coffee in wonderful little cups. We dined one evening at the Palace. The Sultan was present, but of course did not eat with us as unbelievers, and the various Turkish Ministers of State drank only water with the meal, and seemed disinclined to open their mouths in the Presence. Some of the attendants who waited at table wore the same class Order of the Medjidieh as some of the senior Naval officer guests. On another, less formal, evening, when we dined with the Grand Vizier, champagne flowed freely and there was a babel of talk, chiefly in French. We lunched at the Ministry of Marine, and I think that all Turkish officialdom present were dismayed when the Admiral, who had been invited by the Sultan to inspect the Dockyard, would not sit for several hours at the luncheon table, or follow the very limited inspection programme suggested by the Minister of Marine, but walked round (it was a grilling afternoon in June) at a pace at which those used to luxurious living found it difficult to follow. There was not much to be seen excepting unreadiness and deterioration of what had been good material. We also dined at the British Embassy, where I saw for the first time a King's Messenger wearing his official badge of a silver greyhound. He happened to be an old friend of Admiralty days in London.

We were struck, as I suppose most people are, with the contrast of magnificence and squalor. We saw S. Sophia, and we were taken to the Treasury. The jewels (?) reminded one of Sinbad the Sailor and the precious stones as big as pigeons' eggs he used to collect. The marble sarcophagus was a revelation in the art of a sculptor who could work the surface of marble so that you seem to see the skin of well-groomed horses, and the play of the muscles under

the skin. We also had an interesting trip up the Bosphorus, which looked like a magnified River Dart, with trees growing down to the edge of the water on both sides. We landed above Therapia, where the Diplomatic corps spend the summer, and went for a lovely walk along the European side. The butterflies were a great attraction, as some of us were collectors. At one point we suddenly emerged just above the foundations of a new fort being made at Rumeli Kavak, and, happening to have a small camera in my pocket to take reminscences of the trip, I could not resist the temptation of a snapshot, for which indiscretion I suppose I laid myself open to something unpleasant, 'with boiling oil in it.' To my dismay I then saw a Turkish soldier by the working party waving his arm. I put the camera in my pocket and beguiled a shipmate into sitting on the spot to look after an overcoat which I left with him while I went off to meet Captains Wilson<sup>1</sup> and Noel,<sup>2</sup> who were approaching in the distance. When we got back we found my friend surrounded by Turkish soldiers, one of whom explained the enormity he had committed. We looked very serious and suggested that he should be searched in case any mistake had been made. This was done with the expected result and he was released. It seemed that the indiscretion was not very serious after all, as the Sultan invited the Admiral to inspect any Bosphorus fort he cared to see. He chose the biggest one on the Asiatic side (Anatoli Kavak) and took me with him. The guns were of very old type, but in good order. For some reason not disclosed all the most modern guns were being mounted in the Dardanelles before any were sent to the Bosphorus defences.

I think that I have mentioned most of the interesting points about that very enjoyable visit to Constantinople. There was a rather tragic occurrence just as the *Surprise* was leaving. The Sultan had sent off gifts to the officers and crew. Amongst the latter's share were fresh vegetables, chiefly crown artichokes. I do not know whether any of the seamen tried to eat the wrong ends of them or what happened exactly, but the whole lot were soon to be seen floating on the waters of the Bosphorus astern of us. At the last moment the Sultan's white steam barge put off from the shore containing an official bringing a final farewell, and the boat ploughed her way through a fleet of crown artichokes. It was rather unfortunate, and rumour says that next time \*

<sup>1</sup> Admiral of the Fleet, Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., G.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> The late Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Gerard Noel, G.C.B.

the *Surprise* went to Constantinople she had her hen-coops and larder empty in expectation of the usual gifts—which did not arrive.

Sir George Tryon was a very good all-round sportsman and a very good shot. We anchored at a good many places where there was shooting, especially red-legged partridges, and we learned a good deal about their ways and whereabouts at different times of the day. Everyone keen on shooting who has been up the Straits for several years knows of a few specially good spots which, if he is wise, he keeps carefully to himself. My own best find was a place on the Turkish mainland not far from the island of Thaso. You had to land through the surf on an open beach and probably had to wade ashore, keeping your gun and cartridges as dry as you could, and then walk about six miles straight inland over a sandy desert till you came to cultivated land, which swarmed with Russian partridges—there were no red-legs in that part. The Commander of the *Surprise* discovered that the partridges near Moudros in Lemnos Island sheltered from the sun in the caves by the sea during the heat of the day; he used to take a camp-stool to the beach and had much sport there. It was as well to keep such spots secret because of the number of guns in the Fleet. I remember at Tenedos, where I suppose that the total number of partridges in the island at that time reached about ten brace, counting fifty-two guns landing on one afternoon. We had good sport from Salonika, leaving by the early train for Karasouli, Ghevigli, and other stations well known in the great war, returning late the same night. There were snipe and duck to be shot in the marsh to the westward of the harbour. The initiated soon discovered that most of the snipe were to be found in spots trodden by cattle. It was a good place to study bird life. I remember noticing that when a hawk passed over the marsh every snipe got on the wing, but the duck crouched. On another day for the first time I saw an eagle swoop and strike. The quarry was a teal. When at Corfu, we sometimes went across to Albania for shooting picnics. At one of them I remember the difficulty of hitting blue rock pigeons from a rolling boat. We had about ten guns ranged along a steam pinnace outside a cave, a round was fired to bring the birds out, and a cloud of pigeons came out like streaks of blue lightning. Twenty rounds were fired and one bird fell, the rest were untouched, and I think that the one secured probably had the bad luck to fly into shot intended for another.

We spent the autumn and winter of 1892-93 at Malta as usual, I forgot the exact date, but some time during the *Victoria's* first commission we went to Catania while there was a big eruption of Mount Etna. We drove part of the way and then rode up as far as we could on mules, seeing the eruption by night. The burning lava was a wonderful sight, but a sad one for owners of the land. The hot stream set fire to chestnut trees and swallowed up vineyards as it went. We were at the extreme end of the stream, where it was apparently quite solid, but creeping slowly by inches over the land. It was a huge mass of lava several feet high. We were bidden to stand on it, and, not knowing how thick the solid crust was, the experience was not exactly pleasant. We soon had to jump off as the surface was too hot for comfortable walking.

By the time we reached Malta to settle down for the winter the intelligence and staff work had grown a good deal, and it was decided that I must give nearly my whole time to it, only going off the ship when wanted for special duty, and once a week to act as Adjutant of the Marines of the Fleet when they were landed for drill. I managed to hire a room in Strada Mezzodi not far from Admiralty House, and lived on shore for the remainder of the time unless the Admiral went to sea, when I went with him. It was then that I got to know him better, and to realise that his dominating service manner disguised extreme kindness of heart. I remember one morning especially. A young midshipman had set the weekly signal exercise to the Fleet the night before, and had selected a newspaper extract on the morality of dancing, to be flashed in Morse alphabet by one ship and taken in by all others. For this frivolity he was sent for to see the Admiral. I was present when the flag-lieutenant announced his arrival. 'Am I looking cross enough?' said the Admiral. The flag-lieutenant answered 'Yes, Sir' with a note of conviction. 'Then show him in.' Rumour has it that when the flag-lieutenant went in again he found a weeping boy being consoled with his head on the Admiral's shoulder; but this story came to me at second-hand, so I cannot vouch for its accuracy.

Polo on the Marsa was a great amusement after office hours in the winter season, and in those days not expensive. You could get a very good pony for £15, and 'Black Saliba,' a Maltese well known by the Navy, kept our ponies at his stables for fifty shillings a month, all found, including saddles and polo bits. The Navy team

was a strong one that year : Digby,<sup>1</sup> Mark Kerr,<sup>2</sup> 'Kit' Cradock,<sup>3</sup> and Lord Gilford, the Admiral's flag-lieutenant. They reached the final stage in the regimental tournament, but did not succeed in pulling it off. Evan-Thomas,<sup>4</sup> serving in the flagship, was also a fine player, but he was not very fit at the time and his polo had been stopped by the doctor. Then there were race meetings at which I was occasionally given a mount as I could get down to 9 st. 6 lb. with training, and many gymkhana meetings which gave much amusement. A good many people used to come out from England for the winter, and what with the opera, a standing institution at which the flagship generally had a certain number of regular seats, and dances at the club and elsewhere, there was plenty going on. Baden-Powell<sup>5</sup> was Military Secretary to the Governor, and always ready to take a hand in entertainments.

One way and another people in Malta who liked each other had such constant opportunities of meeting that acquaintanceships had a chance of ripening into lifelong friendships, and I think that most men of the Navy and Marines who were up the Straits in those days have a lasting affection for the place because of those friendships. The Army did not like it so much, but they were there all the year round, whereas we went there after long cruises in the summer to baked-up spots, mostly in the Levant, with only our own companionship, which must mean a certain monotony after a time. I have already referred to the cricket on the naval Corradino ground. We also played on the Marsa, where there were no boundaries and it was possible to hit an eight over the smooth hard polo ground, if you were young and agile enough to run it out. There was one corner of the Corradino ground that was not a boundary, it led to a road which soon dipped sharply down hill. I saw an eight run out there too. If only one played forward with a straight bat it was easy to stay at the wicket. Even I once managed to make 174 not out, and at least two of the flagship's team had averages of over eighty. Seldom more than one or two wickets fell before we declared, so it was dull work for the batting tail of the team, as fielding on a sort of hard gravelly and rocky surface is not very pleasant.

The last part of this account reads as if it was all play and no

<sup>1</sup> Captain the Hon. G. Digby.

<sup>2</sup> Rear-Admiral (Major-General) Mark Kerr (Royal Air Force).

<sup>3</sup> Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, K.C.B., who was lost in the Coronel battle.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas, K.C.B.

<sup>5</sup> General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, K.C.B.

work, but it was really more the other way round. By April 1893 a good deal of progress had been made with the intelligence work, which promised before long to be in running order. The *Victoria* was recommissioned in April on the thirteenth day of the month, on Good Friday, and thirteen ward-room officers turned over to the new commission. Sailors are proverbially superstitious, so no attention was drawn to this coincidence at the time. Admiral Jellicoe, then a Commander, was second in command, and Captain Maurice Bourke remained as Flag-Captain. Soon after we recommissioned the time came when almost the most valuable part of the Staff College course was due: all the members of my batch had been to Aldershot to complete their practical training with troops during the previous summer, and I was offered the opportunity of doing the same with the next batch of officers, who had been with us at Camberley during the 1891 session. It seemed a pity to give up this chance, and the Admiral allowed me to go, on the understanding that it must be for two months, and not for the whole course of about four. He also asked Captain Durnford of the *Hecla* to give me a passage to England, which was a great boon, as I had to be considered to be on leave and pay all my own expenses.

After a month with an infantry brigade, of which F. S. Robb<sup>1</sup> was the Brigade-Major, I was attached to a fine battery of R.F.A. under Major Wilfred Lloyd. Then came the news of the loss of the *Victoria* by collision on a beautiful calm afternoon in June off the Syrian coast, Admiral Tryon having gone down with the ship, with over half the ship's company. During the past four years we have had to face the news of heavy loss so often that it is difficult to remember what such loss means in times of peace. The news cast a gloom over the whole Empire, and messages of sympathy poured in from all parts of the world. The controversy that subsequently arose over the causes of the disaster has long been laid to rest, and I do not propose to revive it. My friends amongst the survivors wrote me many letters, chiefly about the heroism of the Royal Marines, who after doing their work stood rigidly in line on the quarter-deck without a movement until the angle of the deck made standing impossible and they were told to save themselves. They were a splendid detachment, some who had been in the old commission I knew very intimately; I had been long enough with the whole to know them well. Rudyard Kipling has written the epitaph of those and others who 'stood and were still to the Birkenhead drill'—

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir F. S. Robb, K.C.B.

'Whether it's ship or whether it's Queen  
Victoria's work to do—  
They done it, the Jollies, Her Majesty's Jollies,  
Soldier and Sailor too.'

Let us leave them with those words. Very few could swim, and two-thirds lost their lives.

I was thankful to receive a telegram ordering me to the Admiralty to help in checking the lists of survivors, and in general work connected with the varied correspondence between the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief, all of modern date having been lost with the ship. The First Sea Lord (Sir Frederick Richards) sent for me. His nickname in the Admiralty was 'King Dick,' and he was, I think, the strongest and finest administrator who ever held that office in modern times. He could not conceal his emotion, and there were tears in his eyes when he spoke of the loss of Admiral Tryon. I also saw the First Lord (Lord Spencer), who told me that the new Commander-in-Chief, Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, was going out at once to conduct the court-martial on the survivors, and that he had sanctioned my being sent out to do the same work as before, pick up the threads that had been broken, and replace the papers and records that represented the past year's work; but first I was to stay at the Admiralty until I had visited all branches and obtained a general grasp of the Admiralty side of all the lost correspondence. After about a fortnight of that work I was given an official passage in a P. & O. to Malta, where I arrived laden with confidential books and documents. A gloom had settled over the whole place and over the squadron. The court-martial had just finished its work, and I saw Captain Bourke for a few minutes before he left for England, much broken in health. His explanatory address to the Court is a classic, containing the spirit of the man, and the spirit of the Naval Service.

Sir Michael Seymour's flag was hoisted in the *Sans Pareil* (Captain A. K. Wilson), the *Victoria's* sister ship, until the new flagship could be commissioned in England, and I was given a free hand by the new Commander-in-Chief to begin all over again, using the experience and knowledge already gained on the station.

(To be continued.)

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